

**Humanitarian assistance
in armed conflicts with**

A children's rights perspective



**SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION AGENCY**

**Department for Cooperation with Non-Governmental
Organisations and Humanitarian Assistance (SEKA)
Humanitarian Assistance Division (HUM)**

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Sida

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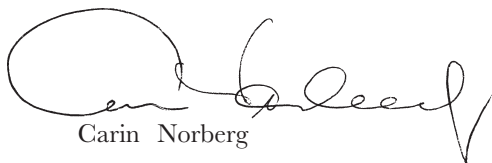
Sida, Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency, is a central government agency, led by a board of directors and a Director General appointed by the Government. Sida's budget is SEK 8 billion 1999.

The budget for Swedish humanitarian assistance is approximately SEK 1 billion in 1999, which includes everything from emergency assistance to refugees and support for reconstruction to work on peace and conflict issues.

During recent years the situation of children in armed conflicts has received an increasing attention. In the autumn of 1996 the study of the effects of armed conflicts on children, produced under the leadership of Graca Machel, was presented to the UN General Assembly. As a result of the study, the UN General Secretary, appointed a special representative for children in armed conflicts.

Also the Swedish government has increased its focus on children regarding Swedish development co-operation. All development co-operation shall be given a children's rights perspective through effective monitoring and implementation of the Convention on children's rights. Swedish humanitarian assistance shall promote the respect for the rights of the children and contribute to meeting all the needs of children.

This paper describes the support which children are entitled to and which is necessary to meet their fundamental needs in armed conflicts and during the reconstruction phase. It constitutes a part of a wider strategy on the conflict prevention role of humanitarian assistance.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Humanitarian assistance with a children's rights perspective	7
1.1 The entire child in focus	7
1.2 About this document	9
1.3 Definitions	12
2. The rights of the child in armed conflicts	14
2.1 On the armed conflicts of today	14
2.2 Convention on the Rights of the Child	15
2.3 Human rights and international humanitarian law	17
3. The rights of the child to help and support	19
3.1 The right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health	19
3.2 Psycho-social support shall be a part of every humanitarian intervention	22
3.3 The right to education	26
4. Special areas	30
4.1 Introduction: certain issues and certain groups of children require special attention	30
4.2 Refugee/displaced Children	30
4.3 Children who have been separated from their parents	34
4.4 Sexual assault and other forms of sexual exploitation	38
4.5 Child soldiers	41
4.6 Children who belong to groups of indigenous origin and national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities	47
4.7 Families headed by children	48
4.8 Disabled children	49
4.9 Arms trade, land mines and ammunition that has not exploded	50
4.10 Media	51

5. The rights of children shall also be provided for in the reconstruction process	52
5.1 A safe and secure return	52
5.2 Education shall be a priority	53
5.3 Tracing and reunifying families after the end of the war	54
5.4 Adolescents can have a particularly important role in the reconstruction stage	54
5.5 Demobilisation of child soldiers	55
5.6 Psycho-social support will be needed for a long time after the end of the conflict	55
5.7 References for the reconstruction stage	56
6. Final words: The entire child – all the time	57
7. Appendices	59
7.1 Checklist of the most important measures for different groups of children in different situations	59
7.2 Reproductive health	64
7.3 Short bibliography	77

1. Humanitarian assistance with a children's rights perspective

1.1 The entire child in focus

The principle of the best interests of the child shall permeate all relations with children and adolescents.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the point of departure for humanitarian assistance to children and adolescents. Children are individuals, worthy of the same respect and attention as adults. The rights of children shall be respected in programmes of development cooperation, and these programmes shall contribute to respect being shown for the rights of children in situations of conflict.

Children have a right to be seen as well as a right to be heard and listened to. The views of a child shall be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. Ways must be sought in humanitarian programmes to enable children to participate in decisions which concern them.

The Convention is a unique document. Since practically all the states in the world have ratified the convention it provides the obvious point of departure for consultations, negotiations and agreements on international humanitarian assistance.

The basic needs of children are the same all over the world. A child is entitled to care and respect. A child needs to feel security and love, needs clean water and food, a roof over its head, and clothes in order not to freeze. The needs are the same in armed conflicts but are much more difficult to meet under such conditions. The food runs short, the health services collapse, the schools are closed and it is often the case that children are forced to leave their secure home environment. Many are separated from their parents, witness terrible acts of violence, are injured and maimed. The overriding

goal of programmes to support children affected by armed conflicts must therefore be to respect the rights of children and accordingly, as far as possible, provide the most basic needs of the children.

Perhaps they have been separated from their parents and other members of their families. Perhaps they themselves are taking care of other children. Perhaps they are children, perhaps adolescents, girls or boys. Perhaps they are at home or perhaps they have been displaced in their own countries and are in areas with a different culture and a different language. Perhaps they are in refugee camps, perhaps in other countries. Perhaps they have enough food and a roof over their heads, perhaps they are continuously exposed to the risk of military attacks, land mines or excesses perpetrated by other children and adults. Perhaps the war is over and the children are on their way back home.

The most important component in the life of a child is its family. Support for children shall be provided, as far as possible, together with or through the child's family. If a child is given help to process its experiences but is suffering because its mother is distressed, the help is rarely fully successful. If, instead, the mother is given help to process her experiences, she will then be able to give her children better support. If the family is able to support itself, if it is possible for the parents to feed, protect and take care of their children in the same way as in peace-time, the child can start to process its experiences.

The entire picture of the child is not complete without consideration also being given to the environment in which the child is. The members of the local community, its culture and traditions, play a significant role in the life of the child. It is here that the child shall continue to live after the war. **It is therefore of crucial importance that all interventions to support children and adolescents are based on the traditional methods which are found in the child's environment.** New, unfamiliar, western methods can take a longer time, be less effective and more difficult to implement. Instead, if support

Children affected by armed conflict can be in many different situations and their need of support varies. From the children's point of view perhaps the most important issue is whether they are together with their families or other adults with whom they feel secure.

is channelled through the family and the local community, it reaches far more children, is cheaper and has a different long-term perspective.

All children are affected by war. However, it is only a few of the children who need extensive help to overcome their experiences. In the first place all children need order in the chaos created by the war. Schools and other activities can re-establish part of the security that comes from having routines and regularity in daily life.

The holistic approach to the child also recognises the long-term needs of children. There is always the risk that a child who was once in a risk group will always be there. It is chiefly poor children and particularly children from marginalised minority groups who risk being recruited as soldiers. Children who have been soldiers have problems in adjusting to civil life and often end up after the war as petty gangsters and street children in the cities. Girls who have been raped in the war often become prostitutes after the war. Support to children may not be broken off on account of a strict division between war-time humanitarian assistance, support for the first phases of reconstruction, and long-term development assistance.

If education programmes in refugee camps take into consideration the curriculum of the home country and also take up the peaceful solution of conflicts, a foundation is laid for the lives of the children after repatriation. However if this is to happen it is necessary that the programme is continued in the home country and that the authorities responsible give high priority to schooling. This in turn instils a belief in the future in children, adolescents and parents and is thus an important cornerstone in peace-time society.

The holistic approach also makes it necessary that the reason for the situation of children is given attention and tackled. All soldiers, on the government side and the opposition side as well as in the peace-keeping troops provided by the UN and regional organisations, must be trained in the rights of children. Local and national authorities, as well as representatives

of humanitarian organisations, must understand the special conditions of children and base their plans for children on children's rights.

A gender perspective is also necessary where children are concerned. The group "children" is not gender-neutral until they reach the age of 18. In many countries girls are subjected to discrimination from the earliest years, during childhood and as adults. Due to a lack of protective legislation or shortcomings in the observance of existing legislation, girls are more exposed to all forms of violence, particularly sexual violence. In many areas girls are subjected to discrimination where schooling and vocational training are concerned.

Each year more than 15 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have children and are faced with complications which are connected with pregnancies. On account of pregnancy and social rejection girls are more exposed than boys to the consequences of unprotected and premature sexual relations, including HIV/AIDS.

More than half of the humanitarian assistance goes to children and they can therefore be said to be the largest "clients" of humanitarian assistance. If all programmes of humanitarian assistance shall work for the best interests of children, children must be visible in the statistics.

Children are entitled to respect for their person and dignity. Children have the right to be seen, not to be ignored, not to be shown disrespect, not to be refused relevant information, not to be talked about instead of talked with etc.

As a consequence of harmful attitudes or customs - such as female genital mutilation, preference for sons, early marriage, sexual exploitation and customs where health and food are concerned - fewer girls than boys survive into adult age in several parts of the world.

1.2 About this document

During recent years the situation of children in armed conflicts has received an increasing amount of international attention. In the autumn of 1996 a study of the effects of armed conflicts on children, produced under the le-

The Swedish government has also initiated a greater focus on children in development cooperation. Development cooperation shall be given a systematic perspective on children through, among other things, the effective follow-up and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Priority shall be given to, among other things, programmes for children in armed conflicts.

adership of an expert, Graca Machel, was presented to the UN General Assembly. The so-called Machel study was produced in cooperation with several international organisations and UN organisations and contains a number of recommendations on the situation of children in armed conflicts. A number of organisations which work in armed conflicts have also drawn up guidelines which focus on children. These include Save the Children, the International Red Cross, UNHCR and UNICEF. Many local organisations also work with and for children and their parents.

This paper describes the support which children are entitled to in armed conflicts and during the reconstruction phase when the conflict is over. It constitutes a part of a wider strategy on the conflict prevention role of humanitarian assistance.

Swedish humanitarian assistance shall promote the respect for the rights of children and contribute to meeting all the needs of children. With its point of departure in a holistic perspective of the child as a full member of society with the right to exert an influence of its own, Sida will work to ensure that the right of children to participate in the decision-making process is respected. The rights of children to food, health care services and a roof over their heads as well as the rights to psycho-social inputs in the form of support, education and activities shall be provided for. This paper does not therefore contain priorities between different programmes for the promotion of the rights and needs of children. All parts are important.

Sida's role is to spread an understanding of the children's rights perspective in development cooperation and of all the needs of children, and therefore Sida aspires to supplement the interventions of other donors. This applies both in cases of programmes which focus directly on children and programmes of a more general humanitarian nature.

This position paper has been produced to improve the capacity of Sida where the target group of children in armed conflicts is concerned. It shall

provide guidance for the assessment of applications of programmes which are aimed directly at children and call attention to the child perspective in other projects, and shall also be used for information purposes by partners in cooperation.

Since this paper is also intended to be used in the form of a handbook, it has not been possible to avoid a certain amount of repetition. The checklist at the end of the paper is intended to support the holistic picture of the child.

The references provided at the end of most chapters make no claims to be exhaustive. They are intended as an introduction to further reading and will need to be updated regularly. The bibliography at the end of the document presents proposals for further reading.

1.3 Definitions

Sida uses the same definition of a **”child”** as the Convention: a child is a person under 18 years.¹

The concept **”children affected by armed conflicts”** includes all children whose lives have been changed on account of the war, i.e. both children in war zones and children in other geographical areas who have been affected by the war, for example injured children and orphans as well as children who are internally displaced persons and external refugees. Children who have fled from an armed conflict and are now in countries with individual asylum, for example Sweden, are also included in the group of **”children affected by armed conflicts”**. However, the latter group are not within Sida’s mandate and are not therefore covered by these guidelines.

The concept of children also includes **”adolescents”**. The reason why **”child”** was selected as a generic term for the entire age group in the Convention was to distinguish this group in relation to the adult part of the population.

¹ **Reference:**
Implementation Handbook for
the Rights of the Child, pp 1–17

However this has had the result that the special needs of adolescents, both girls and boys, have been neglected. Therefore in these guidelines the concepts "children" and "children and adolescents" are used alternately. "Adolescents" is used for the age group 13 to 17 years. In cases in which only small children are referred to, their age is not specified.

2. The rights of the child in armed conflicts

2.1 On the armed conflicts of today

Children in wars are protected by a number of international conventions. International humanitarian law in armed conflicts, human rights including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Geneva Conventions are all applicable. All in all these rules constitute in theory an extensive safety net for children and adolescents who have been affected by war. However extensive efforts are required if the rules are to offer, in practice, children and adolescents the protection they are entitled to.

It is no longer the defence forces of different countries which fight against each other. Now the conflicts are internal, often with a number of warring parties. It is not always the case that a government is involved - armed opposition groups also fight each other. Many conflicts have the character of anarchy with a loss of control and discipline in both the government troops and the opposition forces. Decisions made at the central level are not always obeyed at regional or local level. The character of conflicts as guerrilla wars also has the effect that it is difficult to distinguish between soldiers and the civil population. In the so-called ethnic conflicts it is even more difficult to draw the dividing line between civilians and soldiers. It is sometimes the case that the civil population is not prepared to stay outside the conflict but regards itself as involved in the struggle of its own ethnic group.

Often supplies of food to those in need of help are stopped, both by the government side and opposition groups. The starvation of the civil population is part of warfare. This can never be accepted. According to established practice

During recent years armed conflicts have changed character. Today often more than 90% of the victims are members of the civil population.

which is based on humanitarian law and, among other things, the resolutions of the UN General Assembly, relief consignments shall be allowed to pass.

Normally primary health care services and other medical services do not function during wars. Existing resources are often transferred to the armed forces, and it is sometimes the case that local medical services and medical personnel are attacked as part of warfare. These attacks are a clear breach of one of the most fundamental principles of humanitarian law: protection of the injured and sick regardless of nationality and of medical services in wars.

The production of food diminishes drastically during armed conflicts since the farmers no longer dare to cultivate their land, but the shortage of food is also due to the fact that crops are destroyed and cattle attacked as part of warfare. These attacks against property necessary for the survival of the civil population constitute a war crime under international humanitarian law. The opposing forces are liable instead to protect and respect the civil population.

It is in this situation that the humanitarian organisations work to promote, among other things the rights of children and to provide for their needs. This work has become increasingly difficult and dangerous. It is often difficult for the organisations to reach the target group with their humanitarian assistance, agreements reached with one party are seldom respected by other parties to the conflict, and not always even by local commanders belonging to the same side. In many places the terrorisation of the civil population is part of warfare and those assisting the civil population are sometimes used as pawns in a power struggle.

2.2 Convention on the Rights of the Child

The fundamental principle of the Convention is that the best interests of the child shall always come first. This means, according to Article 3 that *"in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare*

institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

Other important rules in the Convention are the prohibition of discrimination, i.e. that all children shall have the same rights (art 2), and the responsibility of parties to the Convention (States Parties) to undertake all appropriate measures to implement the rights recognised in the convention (art 4).

Furthermore the Convention contains rules on, among other things, the right of all children to be registered immediately after birth, and the right of every child to a name (art 7), the right of children to freely express their views in matters affecting children, and that such views shall be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (art 12), the right of the child to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, medical treatment and rehabilitation (arts 24 and 39), the right to education and social security (arts 26-29), as well as freedom of thought, religion and freedom of expression (arts 13-14), protection from economic, sexual and other forms of exploitation (arts 32, 34-36), and protection against torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (art 37).

No exception is made in the articles of the Convention for situations of war. This means that all the articles contained in the Convention shall also apply during armed conflicts. However article 38 of the Convention has been drawn up specially to cover situations of armed conflicts. According to this article the parties to the convention undertake to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law. This article also contains a 15 year age-limit for the recruitment of children as soldiers. This part of the article is now the subject of re-negotiation and several countries, including Sweden, are working to raise the age limit for recruitment to armed forces and participation in hostilities to 18 years.

Under article 39 children who have been the victims of armed conflicts have the right to physical and psychological rehabilitation and social reintegration.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly in 1989. Today, just under 10 years later, it has been ratified by all the countries of the world with the exception of the USA and Somalia.

UNICEF's handbook for the implementation of the Convention, in which the various articles of the Convention are presented in separate chapters together with comments from the work of the Children's Rights Committee, is an important source for an understanding of the content of the Convention.

2.3 Human rights and international humanitarian law

International humanitarian law for the protection of victims of war, with the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two additional Protocols of 1977, contain extensive protection for the civil population in both international and internal armed conflicts. Article 3 which is common to all four Geneva Conventions and the second Protocol have been created specially for internal armed conflicts.

This means that a person who is not participating in the fighting may not be attacked, but shall be protected and respected by the warring parties. The warring parties shall, among other things, permit relief consignments to reach those in want, facilitate the tracing of parents and reunion of families, respect and facilitate medical services and take measures to prevent civilians being exposed to danger, for example when planning attacks.

Humanitarian law is based on the fundamental distinction principle which requires that a clear distinction is made between combatants and non-combatants.

All conventions on human rights, both global and regional, are also applicable in principle during armed conflicts. However in the UN convention on civil and political rights of 1966 and the European convention on human rights and privileges of 1953, and the Inter-American convention on human rights of 1969, there is the possibility for the States Parties to make deviations from most of the rules of the conventions in situations of crisis. These deviations, so-called derogation, are often made in connection with proclamations of states of emergency. **It is important to underline that the Conven-**

tion on the Rights of the Child does not allow derogation and that accordingly the States Parties continues to retain their obligations under the Convention even if they choose to derogate other human rights conventions.

Accordingly children have better protection than adults.

The states which have ratified or acceded to the Refugee Convention of 1951 and its Protocol of 1967 recognise the right of people to protection if they are subjected to violations of human rights. Many countries also recognise the right to protection in cases of violations of humanitarian law. The UNHCR's mandate to support and help children, adolescents and adults in refugee camps has its basis in the Refugee Convention.

3. The rights of the child to help and support

Under the Convention of the Rights of the Child, children and adolescents shall be permitted to express their views and these views shall be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the children. **Accordingly in programmes of humanitarian assistance children and adolescents shall be permitted and encouraged to participate in decisions which concern them.** This applies to all children without any distinctions being made between different ethnic groups or between girls and boys.

Personnel with knowledge of the special needs of children and adolescents should be involved in both the planning and implementation of every humanitarian programme.

3.1 The right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health

3.1.1 Health, clean water and sanitation

The main cause of death among children under 5 years in armed conflicts is malnutrition and infectious diseases, chiefly diarrhoeal diseases and common children's diseases.

Clean water and satisfactory sanitary conditions are necessary for the health and development of children. In addition to other interventions for children, the following areas shall be given special attention.

The right to medical services is a fundamental right in both international humanitarian law as well as a fundamental human right. According to article 24 of the Convention, every child has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and the right to the treatment of illness and the

rehabilitation of health. It is the obligation of every State Party to guarantee the right of every child to health and medical care. Measures must therefore be taken in the country in question in the initial stages of the conflict in order to maintain, to the greatest extent possible, emergency health services for mothers and children, as well as basic primary health services including child care and maternity care and vaccinations. It is not acceptable that medical care needed by children is redirected to the armed forces.

Similarly every State Party has the responsibility, under the Convention, to take special measures to ensure access to basic health and medical services also for the children and families with children who are displaced persons in their own country.

In the initial assessment of needs of medical services in an emergency situation, the local community, including children and adolescents, should be involved as much as possible. Consideration should be given to local conditions and the traditional way of dealing with similar situations.

In contacts with their patients the medical personnel should be encouraged to use the opportunity to spread knowledge on the rights of children and if possible to report violations of the rules.

Interventions achieve the best and most sustainable results when they are based on and support traditional structures and when women and children are encouraged and permitted to participate in the planning, design and implementation of health and medical programmes as well as sanitary programmes.

Sida's support in this area is part of Sweden's responsibility as a State Party to the Convention to support and encourage international cooperation with the aim of gradually realising the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.

In a refugee situation traditional structures and control mechanisms often break down. Adolescents lose the support which the family and the community have traditionally offered.

3.1.2 Reproductive health

Health care services which provide guidance in respect of reproductive health, as well as antenatal and postnatal care, must also be maintained in emergencies. According to the WHO, maternity health services, based on women's rights, needs and wishes and with full respect for their religious and cultural background, shall be available in all situations.

Unprotected sexual contacts together with sexual abuse and rape lead to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and to an increasing number of early teenage births. To encourage and meet the special needs of adolescents in respect of support and solidarity, special advisory centres should be set up for them, separate from those for adults.

The right to protection against sexual violence and abuse is another fundamental right in international humanitarian law as well as a fundamental human right. Much can be done to prevent sexual violence and abuse, see below **4.4.3**.

3.1.3 Food

In addition to other interventions, women shall also be encouraged during armed conflicts to breast-feed their small children as long as possible. As long as mothers are not seriously undernourished, breast milk provides nutrition for the child. Breast-milk substitutes shall be avoided in principle.

In the distribution of relief consignments special attention shall be given to the need of children and families with children. The number, age and sex of the children shall be given special attention when assessing needs of help. It is also important, with the aid of planning, distribution channels and size of rations etc to guarantee the access of families with children to food and thereby the integrity of the family, with special measures for families headed by women and by children.

Women and adolescents should participate in planning and distribution in order to prevent family members being separated or food being used as a means of exerting pressure and demands for sexual favours etc.

3.1.4 References for the right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health

Machel: paragraphs 136-15, 152-164 + 165; UNICEF Handbook: pp. 315-340, 355-367; UNHCR Guidelines: pp. 53-57, 62-70; UNHCR Evaluation paragraphs. 102-111, 112-115; Ressler-12: pp. 79-111; Mahlasela: Preventive Health Care³; UNHCR: Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations, An Inter-agency Field Manual.

3.2 Psycho-social support shall be a part of every humanitarian intervention

Under article 39 in the Convention it is stated that the States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children who have been the victims of armed conflicts.

Psycho-social support to children and adolescents shall be included as a natural part in every situation in which a humanitarian assistance intervention is implemented. This does not mean that every humanitarian organisation in the area shall be involved in psycho-social support, but that measures shall be taken in the overall planning to ensure that psycho-social support is also available for children

With its point of departure in the social and cultural environment of the child, psycho-social **support** has the aim of assisting the process of inner healing which the child undergoes. This support shall promote the child's self-esteem and identity, and seek to restore the trust of the child in other people, both children and adults.

² Ressler, Everett: Children in War, A Guide to the Provision of Services, A Study for UNICEF, 1993

³ Mahlasela, Joy: Preventive Health Care Among Children and Youth Affected by Armed Conflict and Displacement, Rädda Barnen, 1998

To encourage a child to talk about his or her most difficult experiences at too early a stage can lead to the collapse of the child's necessary protective mechanisms and that the long-term healing process is made more difficult.

Children have a fantastic capacity to adapt to new situations and can also recover from extremely difficult situations and experiences. All children in a war situation are affected by the armed conflict and all need help to process their experiences. However experience shows that only a few are in need of a more in-depth therapeutic support. Instead most children need peace and calm and people who are prepared to listen when the children have reached the stage that they are ready to talk about their experiences.

3.2.1 The family is most important and the social safety system around the child shall be strengthened

The most important component in a child's life is the family/foster family. If the child lives together with its family or a foster family, support for the child can be provided together with, or through, the child's family. In this way it is possible for the child to be given the long-term and continuous support it needs. The method is cost-effective due to the fact that the families themselves are the main participants in the support to the child and it also means that large groups of children can receive support.

It is important to strengthen the position of the family so that the parents/foster parents are given the strength to help the children. It is important to understand that the children's actions, perhaps violent - or perhaps the reverse, apathetic - are normal reactions of children who have experienced abnormal events.

Consideration shall also be given to the environment the child is in. If the child's situation is to be improved in the long term, the local community must be strengthened.

Experience shows that the best results are achieved when the entire social system around the child is mobilised.

Interventions for children shall be produced in a dialogue with the families and the local community and be implemented in the form of partnership between the community and the external organisations. This shall apply in the child's home environment (also during the conflict!), in the refugee camps, and during the reconstruction phase. If neighbours, teachers, medi-

cal staff and others in the local community participate in the support, far more children can be reached than if staff specially sent to find the children are used.

People from different societies in different parts of the world react in different ways to upheavals and terrible events, and their ways of meeting and dealing with these events also vary. Western methods which tend to emphasise individual, clinical therapy are therefore rarely suitable for use in other cultures and traditions. In every society there is a traditional way of handling the process of healing, the so-called *traditional coping mechanisms*. External interventions shall support and encourage such processes which are of no danger for the child. If parents, families and the local community is involved, a long-term network of support for the child is created.

Accordingly humanitarian assistance shall encourage and support existing social networks and forms of support for children who have had severely distressing experiences, or whenever necessary support the re-establishment of networks which existed prior to the conflict. The traditional forms of support can be developed together with the local community. **It is of crucial importance that existing networks and coping mechanisms are not destroyed by external interventions or that methods are introduced which are not consistent with traditional forms of support.**

Those who support children in this way may in turn need support to cope with their own experiences which are often similar to that of the child. Therefore, in order to be most effective, programmes to support children should include parallel programmes for adults.

3.2.2 Return to normal daily life as soon as possible

Daily life around the child must regain a sense of normalcy as soon as possible. Children need a life with structures, many are used to school and daily activities in the household and spare time activities. Health and well-being include both material and emotional support and the possibility to develop

and learn new skills. **Children need to have something to do.** This is true in all parts of the world, particularly in respect of adolescents.

Such activities and routines include, among other things, daily schooling; different forms of vocational and crafts training for adolescents; daily household duties or other work for the family, homes or housing areas where children feel wanted and needed; safe places to play in; training in traditional handicrafts; drama and song; youth clubs and physical activities, e.g. football competitions.

3.2.3 The interventions shall be long-term and children who have very distressing experiences shall not be separated from other children

It is important that the interventions have lasting effects and a long-term perspective. Short-term interventions can do more harm than good and should be totally avoided.

Child soldiers and other children who have particularly distressing experiences shall not, in principle, be separated from other groups of children. The aim of the support to these children is to help them overcome their experiences as soon as possible and resume a normal life for their age group. This return to a normal life is made difficult if children are separated and given attention for their special experiences. See further section 4.5 on child soldiers below.

Passivity, the feeling of being an outsider, and a loss of faith in the future also contribute to greater aggressiveness and strengthen the tendencies to violence which the war has created.

3.2.4 Adolescents must be given scope for their own activities

The needs of children and adolescents are not the same. Particularly in refugee camps and other situations in which families are forced to leave their homes, education and activities for adolescents should be encouraged. For example youth clubs can be started where adolescents are given the opportunity to meet each other. To ensure that their needs are met, adolescents should be supported and encouraged to participate in the planning and

implementation of different activities. Activities can give adolescents an outlet for their energy. It is important that girls are given the opportunity to meet separately. Adolescents should be encouraged to support and lead activities for younger children

3.2.5 References for psycho-social support

Machel: paragraphs 166-183; UNICEF Handbook: pp. 511-528, 529-537; UNHCR Guidelines: 37-51; UNHCR Evaluation: paragraphs. 81-89+ 99-101; ISCA: Promoting Psycho-social Well-being: pp 2-12; Ressler-1; pp. 165-207; Tolfrey: Restoring Playfulness, pp. 89-92 (Guiding Principles); McCallin: The Psychological Well-Being of Refugee Children, Brett/McCallin: Invisible Soldiers pp. 141-181.

3.3 The right to education

3.3.1 A priority in all humanitarian programmes

Education and schooling are particularly important during armed conflicts and shall be a priority in every humanitarian programme as part of the holistic view of the child and its rights. The priority given by society to education gives a signal to children that the adults believe in a future after the war, a future in which educated children will be needed.

The right to education is a fundamental right which is written into the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the UN Convention on economic, social and cultural rights and the regional conventions on rights. According to article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every State Party shall make primary education compulsory and available free to all within its territory. This means that the state also assumes responsibility for giving internally displaced children and refugee children the possibility to have a school education. It is unacceptable that a host country should refuse to give children in refugee camps the possibility of a school education.

The school is an important part of the peaceful everyday life of most children and a continuation of schooling is an important bridge back to the time before the conflict, before the chaos started.

According to article 29 of the Convention the content of programmes of education shall have the objective of developing the child's personality and talents, respect for human rights, and respect for the child's cultural identity, languages and values. With the aid of schooling the child can also learn about peaceful solutions to conflicts, first aid and mine awareness, the need of clean water and so on.

For the very reason that they constitute important psychological symbols, schools and teachers are often subjected to attacks. Such attacks against the civil population and civil property are a crime against humanitarian law. Flexible systems for school education shall also be encouraged in conflict zones. Flexibility can be attained, for example, by holding lessons in different places and through the use of private houses and cellars.

Flexibility is also needed in a wider sense of the term. Many refugee children have never gone to school and therefore a formal school in the normal sense of the term does not perhaps always mean security but is something strange and unfamiliar. In such situations it can be important to start to collect children/adolescents for other, more natural, activities before school starts.

All children, both girls and boys, shall be encouraged to go to school. The reasons why certain children do not come to school must be studied carefully and the children's families and the local community must be involved to solve any problems. If the reason is, for example, that the child is needed for household work or other types of work, lessons can possibly be arranged at times when the need of the child elsewhere is not so great. It is particularly important that the women participate in the planning and implementation of school activities.

The teachers play an important role since they constitute one of the main participants in the social networks of children. Many of the teachers have the same experiences as the children and it is possible for them to understand the experiences of the children. They should be given further training

and special support to give them the capability to meet and support children who have had distressing experiences.

3.3.2 Education for adolescents

The right to education under the Convention on the Rights of the Child also applies to adolescents. However, the shortage of teachers and resources for school education often leads to a situation in which existing resources are used for the most basic programmes in reading and writing and thus for the small children. Often there are no resources to give adolescents further education at primary school level.

However, the education of adolescents should be seen in a wider perspective, and shall be encouraged. **Meaningful education can reverse destructive and aggressive behaviour.** The school can offer the opportunity for exercises in peaceful conflict solution, tolerance for others and respect for human rights. Education for adolescents has often proved to be a way of preventing military recruitment. To reach adolescents in conflict zones or in flight, flexible and innovative methods should be encouraged, for example distance education programmes via the radio.

Vocational training should also be offered to adolescents to encourage independence and to contribute to establishing a belief in the future.

Adolescents who, on account of the armed conflict, have missed perhaps years of schooling should be offered special education programmes to catch up with people of the same age. Experience is available of so-called *accelerated learning* for demobilised child soldiers, for example in Liberia.

For the education of adolescents and in particular girls, it is specially important that families and parents are involved in the aims, content and goals of education and that the forms of education are developed in order to adapt education to the other duties and responsibilities of adolescents.

The re-establishment of the school system should be given highest priority in the reconstruction phase at the end of the conflict.

To be offered basic education together with six-year olds when one is a teenager is seldom an attractive alternative.

There are examples of proposals for the education for adolescents in refugee camps or for internally displaced persons which have been rejected by both governments and donors with reference to the fact that such programmes could be used by the warring factions for the aim of indoctrination or could diminish the interests of refugees in returning home and thus carry the risk of making the refugee situation permanent. These arguments are both unfortunate and unacceptable. The right to education is a fundamental human right regardless of the situation which the child is in. Education programmes offer good prospects of preparing children and adolescents for repatriation and a life in their home country/home district if they are based on the home country's curriculum and they teach knowledge and skills which are of use there. If the education programme is also included as a natural component in the repatriation and reconstruction process, further educational opportunities will not constitute an obstacle to voluntary repatriation.

3.3.3 References for education

Machel: paragraphs 184-203; UNICEF Handbook: pp. 369-389, 391-406; UNHCR Guidelines: 109-119; UNHCR Evaluation: paragraphs 90-98; Ressler-1: 209-222; Pereira/Richman: *Helping children in difficult circumstances, A teacher's manual*; Revised Guidelines for Educational Assistance to Refugees.

4. Special areas

4.1 Introduction: certain issues and certain groups of children require special attention

In addition to the general support needed by all children in war situations, there are also certain groups of children and certain issues which require special attention.

The division of children into different categories has been selected for pedagogical reasons despite the fact that this type of division is rarely completely fair since many children often fit into several categories at the same time. It is important to emphasise that the special interventions which may also be needed for certain groups of particularly vulnerable children must be seen in an overall perspective. In addition to focusing on the problems and short-term solutions, the planning must also take into consideration underlying reasons and issues of a structural nature such as poverty and a lack of infrastructure.

The aspiration should also exist to integrate interventions as far as possible so that children who are already marginalised and particularly vulnerable are not subjected unnecessarily to being singled out and further stigmatised.

4.2 Refugee/displaced Children

4.2.1 Introduction

Refugee children outside their own countries are protected by the Refugee Convention and all displaced children by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

the States Parties shall take measures to ensure that children who are refugees receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance. No exceptions are made in the Convention in respect of situations of war or for children of other nationalities. Accordingly each State Party shall guarantee all the rights of the convention for all children who are within its jurisdiction, and thereby also children who are refugees or are internally displaced in their own countries. **The Convention's requirement in respect of humanitarian assistance is unique, in no other international convention is this obligation expressed so clearly.**

To be forced to leave the ingrained home environment hastily and perhaps in danger of one's life is an upsetting experience for all children. The flight often takes place under difficult and frightening circumstances. The family does not function as it did before, deeply ingrained patterns are broken. Perhaps the family is split up, perhaps the children take to flight without an adult person they know and trust. Children do not always know the reason for their flight and anxiety and uncertainty reinforce the feeling of chaos and insecurity. Regardless of where it happens in the world, their flight affects the physical and emotional development of children.

Displaced children in their own country as internally displaced persons or in other countries as more formal refugees, are a very vulnerable group. Food and shelter are inadequate. The children are undernourished and in poor physical condition, and therefore more susceptible to diseases. The risk of being parted from the family is a permanent threat both to children and their parents as is the risk of being subjected to attack or of treading on a land mine. Women and children risk being subjected to sexual and other forms of assault. Children and adolescents risk being recruited as soldiers.

Since children are dependent on the adult or adults in their company - often a single woman - the experience that their parents are afraid, vulnerable

and defenceless and dependent on the goodwill of others is devastating for children. Children lose their faith and trust in other people and experience that there is no security anywhere. Such experiences can take a long time to process.

4.2.2 Children as internally displaced persons

The situation of children as internally displaced persons is often more difficult than that of children who are refugees. Internally displaced persons are often close to the conflict and accordingly risk being subjected to attack. If the war moves forwards and backwards over the country these people can be forced to flee many times. Internally displaced children are particularly subjected to the risk of being recruited as soldiers.

Internally displaced persons can be gathered together in a form of camp or they can live in the towns and their outskirts and there try to make a living. Children are very vulnerable in these situations. There is great physical and emotional insecurity. There is no food, housing is poor, there is minimal access to health services and schools, and children are often forced to contribute to supporting the family.

The access of internally displaced persons to assistance and financial support is often much inferior than that of external refugees due to the fact that international organisations do not have, or are not given, the possibility to assist these people. Knowledge of their situation is also often limited.

It is important to underline that, under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the government of every country has the same responsibility for all children who are in the country, regardless of whether they are in their home environment or displaced. In particular the right of children to health services and education shall be met through the efforts of the government in question or through UN agencies or other organisations.

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4.2.3 Children and adolescents in refugee camps or camps for internally displaced persons

In general children and adolescents often constitute more than half of the members of a refugee camp.

The situation in many refugee camps, with alcohol and drug problems, ill-treatment and sexual exploitation etc make the children even more vulnerable.

In general children and adolescents often constitute more than half of the members of a refugee camp. Despite this the children are not given any special attention but are included under the heading of "particularly vulnerable groups". **It is important that all statistics are broken down by age groups and sex. The rights, needs and conditions of children must be given more prominence both in the introductory phases of *assessment* and in the *planning, establishment and daily maintenance of the refugee camp.*** As far as possible parents and children should participate in both planning and implementation processes.

It is important that the camps are designed in such a way that there is greater security and children are given the opportunity to play and meet socially. The situation in many refugee camps, with alcohol and drug problems, ill-treatment and sexual exploitation etc make the children even more vulnerable. Support shall be available in the camp for those children who have been exploited sexually or in any other way. Activities to trace family members and to re-unite families shall take place continuously. It is of special importance that children who are born in the camp are registered and that older children are given some form of identification document. **To re-establish a feeling of normal everyday life and to break the tendency to resignation where the future is concerned as well as the frequent aggressiveness among children and adolescents, it is of crucial importance to establish educational programmes and structured activities in the introductory stage of an intervention.** It is particularly important that adolescents are given the scope to be together, with their own activities and own educational programmes, see further section 3.2.4, page 14 above.

Measures shall be taken to prevent the recruitment of children and adolescents into the armed forces in every camp.

The UNHCR's guidelines for children in flight, as well as the evaluation made of the UNHCR's work for children (*Evaluation of UNHCR's Efforts on Behalf of Children and Adolescents*) gives a detailed description of children's rights and need of support. The project *Action for the Rights of Children (ARC)* is a programme of cooperation between the UNHCR and ISCA which has the aim of using education to improve the capacity of the field workers of the UNHCR and other organisations to protect and help children and adolescents in all refugee situations.

4.2.4 References for refugee/displaced children

Machel: paragraphs 63-90; UNICEF Handbook: pp 281-292; UNHCR Refugee Children Guidelines on Protection and Care; UNHCR Evaluation of UNHCR's Efforts on Behalf of Children and Adolescents; Urban Refugees, A Community-Based Approach pp. 65-66 and 75-81.

4.3 Children who have been separated from their parents

Under article 22 of the Convention, the States Parties have a responsibility , together with the UN, to trace parents or other close relatives of internally displaced or refugee children so that children can be reunited with their families as soon as possible. In those cases in which a child's parents cannot be found, the child shall be given the same protection as other children who have deprived of their family environment. The Geneva Convention's first Protocol also underlines the importance of tracing members of families and reuniting families.

"Unaccompanied children", "separated minors" - there are many concepts for that group of children which, for various reasons, has been separated from their families. The definitions vary likewise and can mean children who have been separated from both their parents or children without parents

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and an another (adult) member of the family or another person who under the law and according to custom has the responsibility for the child. Sida does not have a standpoint where definitions are concerned, but underlines the importance of making a clear definition in every intervention. It is also important that adolescents are also included in activities to trace members of their families and to reunite families.

Article 20 of the Convention specifies clearly the alternatives where care is concerned and the responsibility of states in this connection.

4.3.1 Foster homes in the first place - institutionalisation shall be avoided

Children who have been separated from their parents shall be taken care of and given the protection and the help they need. They shall be placed in foster homes as soon as possible. Brothers and sisters shall always be placed together. As far as possible the foster families shall come from the same family or community as the child. **The situation in the foster home should be monitored closely in order to detect any harmful exploitation and abuse at an early stage.** It is important that the community participates in this process so that the child is understood to be the responsibility of the whole group.

Great caution shall be exercised where compensation for foster families for taking care of the children is concerned. Compensation of this type can encourage exploitation and neglect.

In connection with repatriation the situation of children placed in foster homes should be supervised in particular, since it has been the case that foster families have abandoned the "extra" children in such situations.

As a rule all institutionalisation of children and adolescents shall be avoided. Experience shows that children recover much more rapidly and find it easier to return to their families if they have lived together with a foster fa-

mily during the time they have been apart. The very existence of children's homes can have the consequence that parents choose to leave their children at the homes in the hope that the children will have a better life there. If institutionalisation in, for example, children's homes cannot be avoided the conditions there should be followed closely, the number of adults should be in reasonable proportion to the number of children and adolescents, and the stay there shall be made as short as possible.

4.3.2 Registration, tracing and reuniting families

The registration of children and tracing their parents and families is a priority in each emergency situation and shall be initiated immediately. This is particularly important for small children who can have problems in identifying themselves. The planning of activities to trace parents and to take care of children shall be part of the initial planning of all humanitarian interventions in conflict zones. Experience from, for example, the Great Lakes region shows the advantages and the possibilities when UN agencies and major NGOs cooperate in tracing and reunifying families.

It is important in every intervention of this type to clarify why the children have been separated from their parents and families. In certain cases it has been shown that the children know where their parents are. If the reason why the children have been sent away is uncertain access to food or inadequate safety arrangements, this situation should be remedied in the first place.

When the child's parents or other members of the family have been found, the child shall be reunited with his or her family as soon as possible. Adolescents shall be given the opportunity to express their own wishes.

It is important that the local community is involved and supports the child and the family. If the child and parents have been separated for a long time there may be a need to prepare the child and the family for their reunion.

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4.3.3 Preventing separation

In every emergency preparations should be made to help parents keep track of their children. There are examples from Goma where UNHCR staff encouraged mothers to teach their small children their names and home districts. They also supplied long pieces of string which the mothers could use to tie their children to their wrists in order to prevent them from being separated from each other in the returning streams of refugees.

Prior to a predictable movement of people or an emergency, the children should be equipped with some form of identification, for example in the form of a bracelet which contains the most important information. Under article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child shall be registered immediately after birth and, as a matter of routine, all children should be supplied with identification documents.

The distribution of food and other necessities in emergencies can entail a great risk for separation. **It is therefore of the greatest importance that the women participate in the planning and implementation of the distribution. The provision of secure access to food is also perhaps the most important measure which can be undertaken to avoid separation in emergencies.**

4.3.4 No unaccompanied children shall be evacuated

There are so many risks associated with evacuating children from conflict zones that, in principle, it should not take place. One exception is if, at the very least, one parent or a close relative which the child knows well accompanies the child. **Experience shows that in spite of the fact that the children at home may live under a constant military threat, the children feel better staying together with their families than moving to - often well meaning - families abroad.** In the evacuations made from Sarajevo during the war, children disappeared due to inadequate registration, carelessness, or deliberate criminal acts.

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Sida shall not support the evacuation of unaccompanied children. The UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, ISCA and several other NGOs take exception to the evacuation of children and have drawn up guidelines on how the organisations should act if, after all, evacuations take place.

4.3.5 References for children who have been separated from their families

Machel: paragraphs 69-74; UNICEF Handbook: pp 281-292; UNHCR Guidelines: 121-136, UNHCR Evaluation: paragraphs 51-61; Ressler-1: pp. 141-163; Ressler-2: Evacuation of Children; SCF: Keeping children with families in emergencies; SCF: Children separated by war, Family tracing and reunification; UNHCR: Working with Unaccompanied Children, A Community-Based Approach.

4.4 Sexual assault and other forms of sexual exploitation

4.4.1 Rape

Rape is a form of torture and degrading treatment which is prohibited both under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other instruments for human rights and under international humanitarian law. Rape committed as a part of warfare in a war situation is now considered as a war crime and therefore is the subject of international prosecution.

Sexual assault and violation increase in situations of conflict. Women and children are most often subjected to such violations, but boys are also violated. Many children have witnessed the rape and ill-treatment of mothers and older sisters and brothers.

In conflict zones there are many men without families. Women and children are dependent on them for permission to pass, food distribution, access

to safe places or refugee camps, or necessary papers etc. Often the men demand sexual services in return. Sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS can be spread rapidly in this way in conflict zones.

In refugee camps and camps for internally displaced persons, sexual violence and exploitation is also a great problem. In certain areas young girls are particularly vulnerable since they are considered to be free of infectious sexually transmitted diseases.

It is Sida's aspiration that, in all situations where it supports an intervention, in conflict zones as well as for refugees and internally displaced persons, there shall also be interventions to support those people who have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. Women and children who become pregnant after rape and children born as a result of rape, shall be given support. Programmes to support these women and girls shall always be worked out together with the community and be designed in a way which develops and supports traditional methods which do not stigmatise the women and children.

4.4.2 Prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation

The vulnerable situation of women and girls due to the armed conflict, with hunger and poverty, forces many to become prostitutes. When the war is over it is often difficult for the girls to obtain other ways of earning a living.

Often the international presence of, among others, UN troops and other personnel, leads to a considerable increase in the number of child prostitutes.

Sexual exploitation has both a physical and mental effect on children. Their undeveloped bodies are damaged in sexual contacts in a different way to that of adult women. Since a child's mucous membrane is damaged more, it is assumed that there is a greater risk that children can be infected by HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. Children who are subjected to

sexual contacts often lose their self-respect. Unwanted pregnancies as a consequence of sexual exploitation often lead to dangerous abortions. Girls often suffer injuries if the baby is born since their bodies are still undeveloped. To take care of a baby born under such circumstances in a war situation or in flight and without the support of the traditional social safety network is a great strain both on young and older mothers.

4.4.3 Measures to prevent sexual violence

Much can be done to prevent sexual violence. In all conflict situations interventions should be made to train all military personnel, including those who are part of peace-keeping forces, in the rights of children and the responsibilities of the warring parties towards the civil population. The risk that food, money and other necessities are exchanged for sexual services can be diminished if women, children and adolescents are involved better in the planning and implementation of the distribution of food. The number of women personnel in the refugee camps should increase and programmes to increase the independence of women and children through, for example, income-generating projects should be encouraged. Personnel responsible for the safety and protection of the civil population, including the refugees, should be given special training to raise their awareness of the rights of children and the possibilities available to them to prevent violence. Refugee camps should be designed in such a way that the safety of women and children is improved, for example where the placing of latrines is concerned, or through the organised collection of firewood in groups. This is best done if the women are involved in the planning. There shall be a system for reporting assaults in each camp area and, as far as possible, in conflict zones. There shall also be a system to follow-up reports of assaults and to prosecute those suspected.

A further important preventive measure is to ensure that teenage boys have the possibility to find a constructive outlet for their surplus energy and pent-up aggressiveness, through education programmes and activities which are

The number of women personnel in the refugee camps should increase and programmes to increase the independence of women and children through, for example, income-generating projects should be encouraged.

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regarded as meaningful. It is important that the families, including the men, are involved in such activities.

4.4.4 References for sexual violence and other forms of sexual exploitation

Machel: paragraphs 91-110; UNICEF Handbook: pp 455-470; UNHCR Evaluation: paragraphs 43-50; UNHCR: Sexual Violence Against Refugees, Guidelines on Prevention and Response.

4.5 Child soldiers

Children have the right not to be used as soldiers. Under the additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, no child under the age of 15 years may be recruited or used as a soldier. This applies both to the government side and the armed opposition groups. In conformity with a number of other countries, the UN and NGOs, Sweden considers that the lowest age for recruitment into armed forces and armed groups and for participation in conflicts should be 18 years. Sweden is participating actively in the work of drawing up an additional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child with the aim of raising the age limit for soldiers to 18 years.

In most of the armed conflicts of today children are used as soldiers, and their numbers seem to be increasing. Some children are recruited by force. Others join the government's armed forces or an armed opposition group to seek excitement, to participate in a ideological struggle, to defend their own ethnic group, to seek protection from acts of violence committed by other soldiers, or to support themselves and their families.

Most child soldiers are boys but girls are also recruited. Many children start in a supportive function, for example, as porters, errand boys, cooks or look-

outs. Many, in particular girls, are exploited sexually. As recruits children are often treated in the same way as adults and are expected to cope with the same levels of discipline and punishment. Many children are forced to commit terrible acts of violence and also participate in the punishment and execution of other children

4.5.1 Demobilisation of child soldiers

The demobilisation of all child soldiers shall take place as soon as possible. This can take place during an ongoing conflict, during a cease-fire, or formally, at the end of a conflict, in connection with the conclusion of a peace agreement. Demobilisation is merely the short time during which the soldiers hand in their weapons, but it should be preceded by careful planning, and in return the soldiers should be offered support to start a non-military life.

In all peace processes special consideration should be given to the rights of child soldiers. There are many examples which show that this has not been the case, that children have not received compensation and other types of support which the adult soldiers have received. Cooperation should be encouraged between the humanitarian parties involved, both peace-keeping troops and humanitarian organisations, to improve the situation of children and facilitate their demobilisation.

Children should be offered support to return to a civil life, not in the first place in the form of material gifts, but, for example, through the possibility to catch up on lost schooling and to learn another "profession". There are unsuccessful examples, such as in Liberia, where children have been encouraged to leave the combatant groups and have been offered desirable consumer goods such as gym shoes and radios. These types of gifts should be avoided since they are seen as a reward for participating in the conflict and have had the effect of encouraging more children to join the armed groups when the war has flared up again.

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There are unsuccessful examples, such as in Liberia, where children have been encouraged to leave the combatant groups and have been offered desirable consumer goods such as gym shoes and radios.

The aim of the support to ex-child soldiers is to help them gain access to their rights and adjust to civil society in the same way as other children and adolescents of the same age.

4.5.2 Rehabilitation and return to civil society of children who have been soldiers

In the long and drawn-out conflicts of today, in which war surges forwards and backwards over a country, there are children and adolescents who have been soldiers spread out in rural areas, in refugee camps and in the poor areas of towns. They should return to their families as soon as possible. Many do this by themselves, but many more do not know where to find their parents and relatives. The tracing of family members must be started at once.

Children who have been soldiers have experienced terrible events and have often committed gross acts of violence themselves. They are used to strict discipline and to solving conflicts with the aid of violence. And they are accustomed to the power - over adults as well - that weapons provide. This means that children often have difficulties in readjusting to civil society.

Children are entitled to, and need, help to process their experiences and to adjust to life outside the military group. They need help to develop their inherent abilities and often also help to adjust to the norms and rules of civil society. Aggressive and violent behaviour must be broken. To learn to solve conflicts in a peaceful way after having lived under the power of the gun for several years can take time.

If children have been soldiers for a long time, they have missed many years of schooling and can also have lost their links with local customs and traditions, as well as their knowledge of farming and traditional occupations. Children shall be given support and assistance to recover their lost knowledge and skills rapidly. Experience shows that children who have been soldiers want to go to school and dream of training for different civilian professions. Many apply to take part in the existing educational programmes, and there are insufficient resources to admit them all. Support shall be given for vocational training and other interventions which contribute to the return of children to civil life, with a focus on those programmes which do not make distinctions between ex-soldiers and other children and adolescents.

All forms of institutionalisation of children and adolescents should, as a rule, be avoided, as well as all measures which further distinguish child soldiers from other children and adolescents. The aim of the support to ex-child soldiers is to help them gain access to their rights and adjust to civil society in the same way as other children and adolescents of the same age. To single them out as being different by giving them "special measures" has in most cases diametrically opposite effects.

However institutionalisation can be necessary for a short period of time when parents/foster parents are being sought. While waiting for reunification with family members, children and adolescents should be given the support and assistance they need to begin to process their experiences and to recover the knowledge they have lost.

Putting a strong focus prematurely on a child's traumatic experiences should be avoided. Instead the child's capacity, strength and energy should be stimulated to think forwards. Children often talk about their experiences of their own accord when they eventually find an adult person they can trust. **It is therefore important that the adults close to the child understand the child's reactions and are prepared to listen to the child. In most cases the healing process for children and adolescents takes a long time, perhaps several years, and this is therefore best done with the support of the local community when the child has settled down in its own family or a foster family.** As in all forms of psycho-social rehabilitation this should be done with the support of and through the mechanisms which are traditionally used to support children with distressing experiences, through the family and together with the local community. See further section 3.2 on psycho-social support above.

Children often talk about their experiences of their own accord when they eventually find an adult person they can trust.

Families often need to be given support in order to have the strength and to dare to receive children who have been soldiers. Often the children have been separated from their families for a long period of time and they perhaps do not know each other any more. Children, and in particular adoles-

A specific and unconditional international prohibition against recruiting children under 18 years as soldiers and against the participation of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts must be approved as soon as possible.

cents, can be regarded by neighbours and others in the local community as aggressive and dangerous. In certain cases parents have not dared take back their children in fear of reprisals from others.

Sometimes adolescents do not want to return to their families. They have lived apart from their families for a long period of time and have learnt to cope for themselves. Often there are no possibilities for education or employment at the places where their parents live. If the child cannot be convinced of the advantages of returning to its parents, alternative support should be sought for the child. It is important to encourage regular contacts between the child and the family.

4.5.3 Measures to prevent children from becoming soldiers

Despite the complexity of the issue there are a number of different measures which can be taken to reduce the recruitment of children as soldiers. A specific and unconditional international prohibition against recruiting children under 18 years as soldiers and against the participation of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts must be approved as soon as possible. This prohibition must apply to all parties involved in conflicts, both to the government and non-government armed groups. This type of prohibition will contribute to increasing the pressure on governments and opposition groups which still use children as soldiers.

Likewise there is a need of national laws which prohibit the recruitment of children under 18 years. Today this type of legislation can be found in several countries. There is also a need for national legal systems to implement the laws. Parents whose children have been recruited by local military commanders shall be able to get their children back with the aid of the law. One of the greatest problems is that children do not have a birth certificate and neither the children nor the parents can prove that they are too young to be recruited. Interventions for the introduction and implementation of laws and ordinances in respect of recruitment as well as working with public opinion in order to increase knowledge of the national rules shall be given sup-

port. The registration of all newly born children is an obligation for all States Parties under article 7 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Interventions should be made, for example issuing identification documents, to enable older children to prove their age.

Education and information programmes, both international and national, will lead to a greater understanding of the situation of child soldiers. National projects which shape public opinion can also lead to parents preventing their children from being enlisted. In the refugee camps the staff of the UNHCR and other organisations can take action to prevent recruitment.

Since the economic situation is one of the foremost reasons why children become soldiers, efforts should be made to provide for the basic needs of the people. Schooling has also proved to be an important instrument to prevent recruitment.

Often alternative, meaningful activities can have the result that children do not enlist. These activities shall be supported. Examples of these can be found, for example, in Colombia where adolescents in crisis areas are engaged to help younger children and keep them busy and to act as ambassadors for peace. In this way the adolescents are given a new, forward-looking identity, quite different from the frightened and destructive attitude which previously reigned among the adolescents.

4.5.4 References for child soldiers

Machel: paragraphs 34-62; UNICEF Handbook: pp 97-117, 511-528; UNHCR Evaluation: paragraphs 38-42; Brett/McCallin: Children The Invisible Soldiers; Cape Town Annotated Principles and Best Practice; Swedish Save the Children's database on child soldiers: www.rb.se.

4.6 Children who belong to groups of indigenous origin and national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

Very few countries in the world lack ethnic minorities. Experience shows that the groups which were marginalised before the conflict risk having even worse difficulties during the conflict.

Children who are particularly vulnerable during an armed conflict are children who belong to groups of indigenous origin and national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. This also applies in those conflicts which have not been given the epithet "ethnic conflict". This vulnerability can be a the result of a deliberate strategy on the part of the government or the dominating group, but it can also be due to the marginalisation of minority groups as a result of the conflict.

Very few countries in the world lack ethnic minorities. Experience shows that the groups which were marginalised before the conflict risk having even worse difficulties during the conflict.

Under article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children who belong to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or groups of indigenous origin have the right, in community with other members of their group to have their own culture, language and religion.

All children have the right to the same support and assistance in a conflict situation under both humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. No distinction may be made between children of different nationality or origin or for any other reason. This is a fundamental intention of the Convention. The humanitarian organisations shall therefore pay special attention to minority groups and try to obtain special information on their situation in every intervention. This is not done consistently today. The fact that support does not reach children in minority groups and their families can be due to the ignorance of humanitarian organisations about the existence or situation of the ethnic groups, or that the humanitarian organisations are not allowed access to the remote places to which the minority groups have been forced to withdraw.

Special support should be given to programmes which have the objective of increasing the awareness of the particularly vulnerable situation of indigenous and minority groups during armed conflicts. Children and adolescents of indigenous origin and from minority groups are specially vulnerable to military recruitment. Special efforts should therefore be made in refugee camps and other places to protect children from recruitment.

Programmes to improve the situation of the groups, including in particular psycho-social support, shall always be implemented with respect for the distinctive character and traditions of the different groups. It is important that programmes are accepted and supported in the child's local community and that women, as well as men, from minority groups and indigenous groups participate in the planning and implementation of the programmes.

It is of crucial importance for the future situation of indigenous and ethnic groups that their rights are taken into consideration from the very first stages of reconstruction after the end of the conflict. Programmes for returning refugees, for education and training, and for psycho-social rehabilitation should give special consideration to the situation of children from minority groups, and women, men and adolescents should be encouraged to participate in the planning and implementation of the programmes.

References: UNICEF Handbook: s. 407-416; War: The impact on minority and indigenous children, Minority Rights Group, 97/2.

4.7 Families headed by children

Special support and attention shall be given to families headed by children. It is important that the children are kept together and that support is given jointly to the entire group. It is often the case of an older girl taking care of younger brothers and sisters and sometimes other children too. The girls are often extremely vulnerable, are in constant danger of assault, and are

exploited when they seek help for their small families. These girls shall be given special support and encouragement. With respect for the views of the children, foster families can be sought in certain situations to take over the responsibility of the older child. However, in many cases the children prefer to continue to live together and then it is better if the group of children is encouraged to choose and settle down close to a supporting family who can assume a special responsibility to support the leader and other children in the group.

In order to be able to provide better support for families headed by children, further information should be produced on the numbers and situation of these families.

4.8 Disabled children

Under article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the States Parties have the responsibility for ensuring that disabled children have access to education, health care services and the rehabilitation they need. This is a fundamental right which is seldom respected, even in times of peace.

Many children are so severely injured by land mines or by direct attacks that they are permanently disabled. Malnutrition and diseases can also lead to permanent injury. Other children are born with disabilities or become disabled before the conflict.

Under article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the States Parties have the responsibility for ensuring that disabled children have access to education, health care services and the rehabilitation they need. This is a fundamental right which is seldom respected, even in times of peace. Therefore the situation of disabled children is particularly difficult in an armed conflict. Basic health care services and rehabilitation services no longer function and the disabled children are often experienced as more of a burden by their families. If a family is displaced due to war, its disabled child does not always manage to accompany them.

The basic rule of avoiding placing children in institutions and of adapting psycho-social and other types of support to the needs of the child naturally

applies to the same extent to disabled children. In refugee camps and other areas where it is possible, disabled children shall be given specially targeted support as part of the aspiration to give them the possibility to participate in activities, schooling etc on the same terms as other children.

Prostheses and other aids shall be offered to children to the extent that this is possible both during the conflict and in the reconstruction process after the end of the war.

References: UNICEF Handbook: pp 407-416; War: The impact on minority and indigenous children, Minority Rights Group, 97/2.

4.9 Arms trade, land mines and ammunition that has not exploded

Today light weapons in the form of Kalashnikovs and other weapons, as well as land mines, are the weapons which injure and threaten children and adolescents and other members of the civil population in conflict zones. Interventions to reduce the spread of these weapons should therefore also be included in programmes of humanitarian support to children in armed conflicts.

Mine clearance creates safe areas for children and their families. As part of its support to children affected by war, Sida will continue to support mine clearance. In order to improve the safety of children, extensive programmes should be implemented to teach children mine awareness i.e. to make them aware of the dangers of mines. This can be done through the schools or in other forms.

4.10 Media

One important channel for providing information on the situation of children in armed conflicts is the media. The media reach both an international public and a home public. Decision-makers can be influenced to make decisions which serve the best interests of children and home opinion can act to improve the situation of children.

But in order to convey the message, the media need pictures and reports which focus on children. Great caution must be observed when children are exposed in the media in this way. **It is absolutely unacceptable to permit journalists to interview children on their most horrific experiences and then leave them alone with newly-opened old wounds.**

Publicity is necessary in order to change the situation of children in a long-term perspective and in general terms. But this may not occur at the expense of individual children.

It is difficult to strike a balance in this respect. Publicity is necessary in order to change the situation of children in a long-term perspective and in general terms. But this may not occur at the expense of individual children. Many journalists understand this dilemma and should be encouraged to pass on their insight to their colleagues.

5. The rights of children shall also be provided for in the reconstruction process

In the same way as the foundation for the reconstruction process should be laid as early as possible in the introductory stage of the peace process, all interventions for children during the conflict shall have the aim of laying the foundations to ensure that all the rights of children shall be respected after the war. The rights and needs of children should be included as a component in every peace agreement.

Priorities for children in the reconstruction process directly after the end of the war include measures to guarantee the right of children to a safe return, a continuation of their education, massive efforts to trace and reunite families, the active participation of adolescents in the process, and more and extended programmes for psycho-social health.

If the rights, safety and security of children can be guaranteed, this is a measure of the success of the repatriation programme.

5.1 A safe and secure return

The planning for every repatriation to a home country and home district should be based on the children's needs, with the rights of children as the guiding star. If the rights, safety and security of children can be guaranteed, this is a measure of the success of the repatriation programme. Women and children from the groups in question shall always participate in the planning process.

Special efforts should be made to prevent children being separated from their parents. It has happened that foster parents have abandoned foster

children when they have returned, perhaps for reasons of tradition - the child's spirits do not know the forefathers' spirits in the home village - or for practical, financial or other reasons. Children placed in foster homes should therefore be monitored particularly carefully during repatriation and the foster families should be encouraged to keep the children.

Adolescents can have spent the greater part of their lives in exile. It may be necessary to prepare them to live independently, for example to teach them about the crops and food in the home district. In particular young mothers without older female relatives can need help to know what local foods are suitable for small children.

5.2 Education shall be a priority

The fact that schools and other forms of education have high priority in the reconstruction process provides signals to both children and adults that the decision-makers believe in peace.

The fact that schools and other forms of education have high priority in the reconstruction process provides signals to both children and adults that the decision-makers believe in peace. These types of signals are important and lay the foundation for instilling a belief in the future in the population.

Education programmes should provide practice in reconciliation and take up the peaceful solution of conflicts, as well as covering mine awareness and providing other necessary knowledge for the new country.

Teachers and other personnel working with children should be given, as a priority, training in understanding and supporting children to deal with their experiences from the war. Children with very distressing experiences should not be separated from other children in the reconstruction stage, but should be kept together as far as possible with children of the same age.

5.3 Tracing and reunifying families after the end of the war

When the conflict is over, new possibilities are made available to seek members of families who have disappeared. The planning of massive programmes to trace people should be included as a part of every peace agreement.

Deficient and destroyed infrastructure and the presence of land mines can have the consequence that it can take a long time to reunify families after the war. It is therefore important to plan for the further care of single children.

It is of crucial importance that the adolescents believe in the peace and that their energy is channelled into the reconstruction process.

5.4 Adolescents can have a particularly important role in the reconstruction stage

Adolescents who have perhaps lived the greater parts of their lives in a conflict can be both a positive and a destructive force in the reconstruction stage. It is of crucial importance that the adolescents believe in the peace and that their energy is channelled into the reconstruction process. For this to happen it is necessary that the basic intentions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the right of children to participate in decisions concerning them and concerning respect for the child as an individual are observed.

Adolescents should be permitted to participate both with constructive ideas and solutions and in planning and problem-solving tasks.

Information and training will probably be needed to enable decision-makers at different levels to see adolescents and to let them participate.

5.5 Demobilisation of child soldiers

See section above on child soldiers.

5.6 Psycho-social support will be needed for a long time after the end of the conflict

A natural protective mechanism in both children and adults is to build a mental wall around very distressing experiences. This wall is particularly strong as long as the child remains in an insecure environment, where access to food is insecure, or where the child still risks being under attack.

Children's memories and experiences do not disappear at the end of the war. However this is a common misconception - or hope - among adults who often consider that when the war is over everybody shall look forward, and not dwell on what has been done and which cannot be undone. Neither is a child's memory as short as many seem to believe. Distressing experiences which are left unprocessed affect the child up into adult age. It is therefore important that the right of children to psycho-social support is also given priority in the peace-time society. Programmes which have been started must continue - here it is a question of long-term healing processes. See further section 3.2 above on psycho-social support.

A natural protective mechanism in both children and adults is to build a mental wall around very distressing experiences. This wall is particularly strong as long as the child remains in an insecure environment, where access to food is insecure, or where the child still risks being under attack. When the child feels physically secure, after the conflict or in a country far from the conflict, for example Sweden, the mental wall eventually cracks and the child can start to feel much worse than it did during the conflict. The need of support can thus, paradoxically, be greater when the conflict is over.

Peace provides, in principle, the possibility to reach all children around the country. Methods must therefore be developed to help as many as possible. The family and the community with teachers and other adults close to the

child must be involved if such an extensive programme shall succeed. If the child is to receive the best help possible, the adults must also be given help to process their experiences, which are often similar to the child's.

5.7 References for the reconstruction stage

Resettlement handbook, UNHCR

6. Final words: The entire child – all the time

To describe the situation of children in armed conflicts is difficult to do in individual sections of a document. The principle of the best interests of the child requires that the entire child is included in the planning all the time. Nevertheless for practical and pedagogical reasons it is necessary that different vulnerable groups, different situations which the child meets, and different types of support which the child needs are presented separately.

However most areas overlap. There are rarely clear dividing lines between the conflict situation and the first stages of the reconstruction process. The psycho-social support is, in principle, much the same both during and after the conflict. And so on.

It is therefore of the greatest importance that planning and implementation are coordinated between different organisations and between those who work with humanitarian assistance in situations of conflict, those who work with the peace process and those who are engaged in the first stages in the work of reconstruction and long-term development.

Shaping public opinion for the rights of children, in peace and in war, is of decisive importance for the understanding and application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. If the situation of children is to really improve, a greater understanding of children and their special conditions and needs is required among the staff at the humanitarian organisations. Knowledge and understanding must also be greater among local and national decision-makers. Educational projects similar to the so-called ARC project within the UNHCR and the Internal Save the Children Alliance (ISCA), as well as UNICEF's recently started project shall be encouraged.

The holistic perspective of the child in humanitarian assistance means that all the rights of the child, and thereby all the components necessary for the physical and mental development of the child, are included in every situation. Health shall not be given priority over education, the registration of the newly born shall not be given priority over psycho-social activities, tracing families shall not be given priority over the participation of women and children in the planning of food distribution. **The child's right to respect for his/her person and opinions necessitate that the child is also respected as a full and complete person.**

The holistic perspective of the child in humanitarian assistance means that all the rights of the child, and thereby all the components necessary for the physical and mental development of the child, are included in every situation.

In this document certain of the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been given prominence. This does not mean that the other articles and rights are of less importance. The strength of the Convention lies in the fact that all its articles are applicable during armed conflicts.

The well-being of children and adolescents provides an indication of the situation in society. The results and effectiveness of the humanitarian programmes should therefore be measured in how well children and adolescents feel.

1 Reference: Implementation Handbook for the Rights of the Child, pp 1-17

2 Ressler, Everett: Children in War, A Guide to the Provision of Services, A Study for UNICEF, 1993

3 Mahlasela, Joy: Preventive Health Care Among Children and Youth Affected by Armed Conflict and Displacement, Rädga Barnen, 1998

7. Appendices

7.1 Checklist of the most important measures for different groups of children in different situations

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the point of departure for humanitarian assistance to children and adolescents. **Swedish humanitarian assistance shall promote respect for the rights of children and contribute to meeting all the needs of children.** With its point of departure in a holistic perspective of the child as a person worthy of respect, Sida will work to ensure that the right of children to participate in and exert an influence on decisions shall be respected. The rights of children to food, health care services and a roof over their heads shall be met as shall their rights to psycho-social interventions in the form of support, education and other activities. These guidelines do not therefore contain priorities between different types of interventions to promote children's rights and needs. All are important.

The work for children's rights and support for children shall permeate all Sida's programmes, also interventions which are not specifically directed towards children as well as interventions which are not administered in the area of humanitarian assistance. Children shall be visible in all humanitarian interventions, as well as in follow-ups and evaluations. It is important from the point of view of credibility that these considerations also form the basis of talks with UN funds, programmes and agencies as well as with the World Bank and the IMF and regional organisations.

A checklist can never be made completely exhaustive. There are always more inputs and methods which have been adapted to local conditions. The checklist shall be used as a point of departure and a source of ideas and the-

reby provide the basis for the dialogue with Sida's partners in cooperation and other organisations which seek Sida's support. The checklist may never be allowed to act as an obstacle to flexibility and innovative ideas and methods.

As a State Party to the Convention, Sweden has a responsibility to promote and encourage international cooperation with the aim of realising the rights of children. Sida's role is to spread an understanding of the children's rights perspective in development cooperation and of all the needs of children, and Sida therefore aspires to supplement the interventions of other donors. This applies both to programmes which focus directly on children and to more general humanitarian interventions. Therefore Sida's programme officers shall make an initial assessment of whether the following interventions to promote the rights of children and basic needs of children in all situations and in all places are met by an organisation:

- health care and medical services
- food, clean water and sanitation
- counselling and support in respect of reproductive health
- registration and tracing activities
- looking after children who have been separated from their parents
- reuniting families
- support through families and the local community for children with distressing experiences
- daily activities for children and adolescents
- education

Special support and attention shall be given to

- children who have been used as soldiers
- children who have been subjected to sexual violence and other forms of sexual exploitation
- disabled children
- internally displaced children and refugee children
- children from indigenous and minority groups
- children looking after other children and children who are heads of families

Health, clean water, food and sanitation

1. ☐ what measures have been taken by the country in question to maintain emergency medical services for the children and their families, as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child? how are internally displaced persons included? refugees from other countries? minority groups? disabled children?
2. ☐ what measures have been taken by the country in question to maintain primary health care services for the children and their families, as stipulated in the Convention? how are internally displaced persons included? refugees from other countries? minority groups? disabled children?
3. ☐ what statistics are there on the children in the area, broken down by age and by girls and boys?
4. ☐ what other organisations are supporting the same children? with what interventions?
5. ☐ how are (were) children, adolescents and women involved in the initial assessment of the needs of medical services? what guarantees are there that the rights of children to express their views and to be listened to are respected?
6. ☐ how are children, adolescents and women involved in the planning and implementation of health and medical services?
7. ☐ what traditional methods exist to meet similar situations? what consideration is being given to these methods and to the possibilities locally of meeting the needs of health and medical services?
8. ☐ what training have the medical staff (local and external) had in the rights and special needs of children?
9. ☐ how do the medical staff take advantage of the possibility to spread information about the rights of children to their patients?
10. ☐ what possibilities are available to medical staff to report abuses against children's rights, other human rights and international humanitarian law? how are such reports followed up?
11. ☐ what measures are being taken to encourage women to breast-feed their small children as long as possible? what information is there on the average weaning age? are there any differences in the length of time boys and girls are breast-fed? how are breast-milk substitutes avoided?
12. ☐ how do women and adolescents take part in the planning and implementation of the distribution of food?

13. ☐ what special consideration is given to the needs of children and families with children in the distribution of food? what consideration is given to the numbers, age and sex of the children in assessments of the needs of assistance?
 14. ☐ what measures are being taken to prevent the children from being separated from their families in connection with the distribution of food?
 15. ☐ what measures are being taken to prevent food being used as a means to exert pressure and make demands for sexual services etc?
 16. ☐ what possibilities are there to safeguard the long-term supply of food to the families? what measures are being taken for this purpose?
 17. ☐ how is the time after the conflict and the reconstruction phase being planned? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?
- ## 7.2 Reproductive health
1. ☐ what counselling services are there in respect of reproductive health? what measures are being taken to reach both women and men?
 2. ☐ what special counselling services are there for adolescents? how are girls and boys reached?
 3. ☐ what statistics are there on children in the area, broken down by age and gender disaggregated?
 4. ☐ what other organisations are supporting the same children? with what interventions?
 5. ☐ what maternity care is there? what measures are being taken to reach all women? what special measures are there for parents under the age of 18 years?
 6. ☐ how are the rights, needs and wishes of children and women looked after in the maternity health services? what guarantees exist concerning full respect for the religious and cultural backgrounds of children and women? what guarantees are there that the right of children to express their views and to be listened to are respected? what are the most common problems in this respect?
 7. ☐ what traditional methods are there for counselling in respect of reproductive health and maternity care? how can these methods be supported and possibly developed?

8. ☐ what training has the medical staff (local and external) had in the rights of the child and the special needs of children?
9. ☐ how do the medical staff take advantage of the possibility to spread information about the rights of children to their patients?
10. ☐ what possibilities are available to medical staff to report abuses against children's rights, other human rights and international humanitarian law? how are such reports followed up?
11. ☐ how is the time after the conflict and the reconstruction phase being planned? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?
3. ☐ what other organisations are supporting the same children? with what interventions? do other organisations also run psycho-social projects?
4. ☐ how does the organisation applying for a grant define psycho-social support?
5. ☐ what knowledge of the special needs of children and adolescents is possessed by personnel participating in the work?
6. ☐ how is the family/foster family involved in the support to the children?
7. ☐ what guarantees are there that the rights of children to express their views and be listened to are respected?
8. ☐ what support is being given to strengthen the family/foster family with the aim of helping the family support the child?
9. ☐ what are the roles of the mothers and fathers in the support to the children?
10. ☐ what time aspects does the intervention have? what plans and guarantees are that the intervention has a long-term perspective and continuity?
11. ☐ how is the local community being involved for the children? what social safety nets and local forms of support are there for the children? can these be supported and encouraged?

Psycho-social support

1. ☐ how does the government of the country discharge its responsibility under the Convention in respect of taking all suitable measures to promote physical and mental rehabilitation and social readjustment of children subjected to armed conflict?
2. ☐ what statistics are there on children in the area, broken down by age and gender disaggregated?

12. ☐ if there are no social safety nets, what support can be given to encourage their re-establishment?
13. ☐ what forms of dialogue are there to develop existing social networks and forms of support when necessary?
14. ☐ what measures are being taken to avoid external interventions or methods which are not consistent with traditional forms of support?
15. ☐ how is the dialogue with the family and the community being conducted, and who is participating? what follow-up is there? what possibilities are available to the children to express their opinions?
16. ☐ what traditional coping mechanisms are there for the healing process? how can these be supported and encouraged?
17. ☐ what support is being given to children with particularly distressing experiences? what roles are parents and the community playing? how are they involved? what support is there?
18. ☐ what regular activities are there for children? how are these held? how is the participation of the children and the parents guaranteed in the decision-making process and implementation?
19. ☐ what activities are there for adolescents? how and by whom are these activities being planned and run? who makes the decisions?
20. ☐ what efforts are being made in the intervention to spread information about the rights and special needs of children?
21. ☐ how is the time after the conflict and the reconstruction phase being planned? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?

The right to education

1. ☐ what priority has been given to education in the total intervention for children at the place in question?
2. ☐ what measures have been taken by the country in order to guarantee obligatory and free basic education for all children in accordance with the Convention? how are internally displaced children included? how are refugees from other countries included?
3. ☐ how do the government of the country and, where applicable, external organisations meet the requirements of the Convention that education shall have the aim of developing the child's personality and talents and respect for human rights?

4. ☐ how is schooling being organised in conflict zones?
5. ☐ what measures are being taken to ensure that all girls have access to education? why don't all children participate? how can the proportion of girls be increased? different ethnic and indigenous groups? what statistics are available on children in the area, broken down by age and gender disaggregated?
6. ☐ what other organisations are supporting the same children? with what interventions?
7. ☐ what guarantees are there that the rights of children to express their views and be listened to are respected?
8. ☐ how do parents participate in the planning and implementation of the schooling and vocational training of children and adolescents?
9. ☐ what support is being given to teachers to enable them to process their own experiences and to help children with distressing experiences?
10. ☐ what other educational programmes are available at primary level for adolescents? how are girls guaranteed equal opportunities to education? what vocational training is available?
11. ☐ how is education being arranged for adolescents who have a lack of schooling or none at all?
12. ☐ what do educational and vocational training programmes for adolescents contain?
13. ☐ what preparations are being made for life after the conflict? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?
14. ☐ what efforts are being made in the intervention to spread information about the rights and special needs of children?

Children in flight

1. ☐ how does the government discharge its responsibility under the Convention to guarantee all the rights included in the Convention for internally displaced children and refugee children within its jurisdiction?
2. ☐ what statistics, broken down by girls and boys, are there on children who are internally displaced or refugees? how many are there? ethnic groups? where are the children? how do they live? how is their security?
3. ☐ what possibilities are available to the organisations to reach all internally displaced and refugee children? and children belonging to minority and indigenous groups?

4. ☐ what health and medical services are available for internally displaced and refugee children? reproductive health? how are women and children involved?
5. ☐ how is the distribution of food and other necessities to protect children and guarantee the rights of children being planned and implemented? how are women and children involved?
6. ☐ what activities can be organised for internally displaced and refugee children? how are the children's families and the local community involved? what other forms of psycho-social support are available?
7. ☐ what support is available for children and adults who have been subjected to sexual violence? how are women and children involved?
8. ☐ what support is given to children who have been separated from their families? how are these children taken care of?
9. ☐ how is registration, tracing family members and reunifying families organised? what organisations participate and how do they cooperate with each other?
10. ☐ what form of registration is there for the newly born? what identification documents are there for children and adolescents?
11. ☐ what measures are being taken to prevent the recruitment of children as soldiers in refugee camps? how are women and children involved?
12. ☐ what education is available for internally displaced and refugee children and adolescents? how are women and children involved?
13. ☐ what knowledge do the personnel involved in the work have of the special needs of children and adolescents?
14. ☐ how are the rights of children integrated in the initial assessment of the needs of refugees, and in the planning, design and establishment of refugee camps?
15. ☐ how are/were children, adolescents and women involved in the planning and implementation of interventions for refugees? how is the right of children to express views and to be listened to guaranteed?
16. ☐ what preparations are being made for life after the conflict? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?
17. ☐ what efforts are being made in the intervention to spread information about the rights and special needs of children?

Children separated from their parents

1. ☐ what measures are being taken by the country in question to discharge its responsibilities under the Convention for tracing parents and relatives of refugee children?
2. ☐ what statistics are there on children in the area, broken down by age and gender disaggregated?
3. ☐ what other organisations are supporting the same children? with what interventions?
4. ☐ how are registration and tracing activities being planned in the initial assessment of the intervention?
5. ☐ what cooperation exists between organisations, and between organisations and authorities?
6. ☐ how is registration done? what definition is used by the organisation for unaccompanied children?
7. ☐ what knowledge do the personnel involved in the work have of the special needs of children and adolescents?
8. ☐ how are unaccompanied children looked after? how are siblings treated?
9. ☐ how is the right of children to express views and to be listened to guaranteed?
10. ☐ how are foster families selected? how does the local community participate in placement in foster homes and follow-up and what influence do they have in this respect? what traditional methods exist to take care of children who have been separated from their parents? how can these methods be supported and possibly developed?
11. ☐ how are foster home placements followed up?
12. ☐ are foster families compensated? what families and why? what effects does this have?
13. ☐ are children institutionalised? why? what measures are being taken to stop this? what is the institution like?
14. ☐ how does the tracing of members of families take place?
15. ☐ how and why have children been separated from their parents?
16. ☐ how does reunification take place? how does the local community participate?
17. ☐ what preparations are children and parents given prior to reunification?
18. ☐ how are children and families followed up after reunification?

19. ☐ what support is given to families to prevent separation? what measures have been taken to prevent separation in connection with the distribution of food and other necessities?
20. ☐ what forms of identification do the children have?
21. ☐ how is evacuation prevented?
22. ☐ how is security improved in cases of evacuation which cannot be prevented? how many adults known to the child accompany the child?
23. ☐ what efforts are being made in the intervention to spread information about the rights and special needs of children?

Sexual violence and other forms of sexual exploitation

1. ☐ what measures have been taken/are being taken by the state under the Convention to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual violence?
2. ☐ what support is available for girls and boys who have been subjected to sexual violence?
3. ☐ how is the support adapted to traditional conditions and cultures?

4. ☐ what knowledge do the personnel involved in the work have of the rights and special needs of children and adolescents?
5. ☐ what statistics are there on children in the area, broken down by age and gender disaggregated?
6. ☐ what other organisations are supporting the same children? with what interventions?
7. ☐ what special support is given to girls who give birth to children, and to children who are born, as a result of rape?
8. ☐ how do women, children and adolescents participate in the planning and implementation of the support?
9. ☐ how is the right of children to express views and to be listened to guaranteed?
10. ☐ how does the family participate?
11. ☐ how is the local community involved? who participates?
12. ☐ how is the reconstruction stage prepared? what plans are there to guarantee continuity?
13. ☐ what measures have been taken to prevent sexual violence in the camps?
14. ☐ how does the system for reporting and following up violation function?
15. ☐ how is the independence of women and children strengthened?

16. ☐ how are military personnel trained?
17. ☐ what special training programmes are there for guards and security personnel?
18. ☐ what special training is available for doctors and others who meet children and adolescents?
19. ☐ what "diversionary" activities are there for young boys? how are they planned and implemented? who participates?
20. ☐ what efforts are being made in the intervention to spread information about the rights and special needs of children?
4. ☐ how many children are estimated to be soldiers? girls and boys respectively? age? who has used them? have they been used by the warring factions?
5. ☐ what other organisations support the same children? with what interventions?
6. ☐ what consideration is given to the rights of children and how is this planned when a general demobilisation takes place?
7. ☐ what measures are being taken during the conflict to promote the demobilisation of child soldiers?
8. ☐ what compensation is offered to children who have been soldiers to return to civil life? what short-term/long-term effects can this compensation/gift have?
9. ☐ what support is given to children who have been soldiers to return to their families? what form of tracing activities are there?
10. ☐ how are children looked after while the tracing activities take place?
11. ☐ if institutionalisation cannot be avoided: how is it arranged? what measures are being taken to make the stay there as short as possible? what protection is available, particularly for small children and girls, against sexual and other forms of exploitation?

Child soldiers

1. ☐ what measures are being taken by the country in question to prevent children from being recruited as soldiers? what age limits apply to recruitment?
2. ☐ what measures are being taken by the country in question to promote the physical and mental rehabilitation of children who have been soldiers, as laid down in the Convention?
3. ☐ what national laws are there against the recruitment and utilisation of children as soldiers? how does the legal system follow-up these laws? what possibilities exist to object to recruitment into government forces?

12. ☐ what do the children themselves want to do? what are their future plans and dreams? what possibilities are available to fulfil these plans?
13. ☐ what support is being given to children to process their experiences? short-term? long-term? what training is given to the personnel working close to the children to enable them to understand the children's reactions and to be prepared to listen?
14. ☐ what traditional methods exist? how can these be supported and possibly developed?
15. ☐ what type of education and activities are being offered to the children? what special opportunities are given to adolescents? how do children participate in the planning, decision-making process, and the implementation of education programmes and activities? how is the right of children to express views and to be listened to guaranteed?
16. ☐ what help is given to the children to enable them to adapt to the norms and rules of civil society?
17. ☐ what support is given to the family/foster family to facilitate reunification? and to support the child's processing of its experiences?
18. ☐ how can the local community be prepared for and support the child's reunification with its family?
19. ☐ what support is given to adolescents who do not wish to return to their families?
20. ☐ what preparations are being made for life after the conflict? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?
21. ☐ if national legislation has not yet prohibited the use of children under 18 as soldiers: what work is being done with public opinion to raise the age limit to 18 years?
22. ☐ what measures are being taken to implement existing laws and ordinances?
23. ☐ what measures are being taken to promote the registration of newly born children? and to supply older children with identification documents?
24. ☐ what measures are being taken to persuade opposition groups not to recruit children under 18?
25. ☐ what work is being done to raise awareness of the use of children as soldiers and on the situation of child soldiers?
26. ☐ what measures can be taken by personnel and members of refugee camps to prevent the recruitment of children?
27. ☐ what alternative, meaningful activities are there for children and adolescents which have the aim of preventing from them from choosing to become soldiers?

28. ☐ what other measures are being taken to prevent the recruitment of children as soldiers? national and international interventions?

Children who belong to indigenous groups and national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

1. ☐ what measures are being taken/have been taken by the country in question in order to prevent distinction being made between children from different ethnic groups, minorities and majorities, in accordance with the Convention? what special measures are being taken by the country to secure the right of minority children and children from indigenous groups to practise their cultures and speak their own languages?
2. ☐ what indigenous or minority groups are in the area in which the intervention shall take place? how many children? girls and boys?
3. ☐ what special consideration is being given by humanitarian organisations to prevent a situation in which children are discriminated against in the intervention? what measures have been taken by the applicant organisation? what obstacles, if any, exist to reaching all children in the area?

4. ☐ what efforts are being made to increase the awareness of the rights of indigenous and minority groups and their special vulnerability in armed conflicts?
5. ☐ what efforts are being made to prevent the military recruitment of children from these groups?
6. ☐ what traditional methods exist in these groups to support children with distressing experiences? what special consideration is given to children from minority groups in the psycho-social work?
7. ☐ how are children, women and men from indigenous and minority groups involved in the planning and implementation of interventions? how is respect for the right of children to express views and to be listened to respected?
8. ☐ what special consideration is given to children from indigenous and minority groups in the planning and implementation of the reconstruction phase after the end of the war?

Families headed by children

1. ☐ what information is available on families headed by children?

2. ☐ what special support is being given to these families and in particular to the child who is head of the family?
3. ☐ what efforts are being made to promote the right of children to participate in the planning and implementation as well as the decisions which concern them? how is the right of children to express views and to be listened to respected?
4. ☐ what measures are being taken to keep these small families together?
5. ☐ what preparations are being made for life after the conflict? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?
3. ☐ what efforts are being made to promote the right of children to participate in the planning and implementation as well as in the decisions which concern them? how is the right of children to express views and to be listened to respected?
4. ☐ what support is being given to the family and local community to support these children? how are disabled children treated traditionally?
5. ☐ how are the special needs of disabled children met in respect of aids, for examples prostheses, and health care?
6. ☐ what rehabilitation is given to the children?
7. ☐ what interventions are being made to give disabled children access to education and activities on the same terms as children without disabilities?

Disabled children

1. ☐ what measures are being taken by the country in question, under the Convention, to give disabled children access to education, health services and the rehabilitation needed by these children?
2. ☐ how many children in the area in question are disabled? girls and boys? different ethnic groups? who are the children living with? what special difficulties are encountered by these children in connection with the armed conflict?
8. ☐ what interventions are being made to increase knowledge and awareness of the situation of disabled children?
9. ☐ what other interventions are being made to support disabled children?
10. ☐ what preparations are being made for life after the conflict? what plans are there to guarantee short-term and long-term continuity?

Children in the reconstruction phase

1. ☐ what efforts are being made to ensure that peace agreements and other agreements guarantee the rights of children and take the needs of children into consideration?
2. ☐ what efforts are being made to ensure that the planning and implementation of repatriation takes place in accordance with the rights of children and takes the special needs of children and adolescents into consideration?
3. ☐ what efforts are being made to prevent children from being separated from their parents?
4. ☐ what special efforts are being made to guarantee that the right of children to education is given high priority? (see also education above)
5. ☐ what efforts are being made to promote the tracing of family members and the reunification of families in the reconstruction phase? what efforts are being planned and implemented to take care of unaccompanied children while parents or foster parents are being sought? (see also above)
6. ☐ what special efforts are being made to involve adolescents and to utilise their energy in the reconstruction phase?
7. ☐ how will the psycho-social support be continued and developed during the reconstruction phase? what methods are available to reach many children and also to support the adults close to the children? (see further psycho-social support, above)

7.3 Short bibliography

The following short bibliography includes a number of the more important documents in the field of children and armed conflicts. A more exhaustive bibliography has been compiled in the ARC project (*Action for the Rights of Children: A Training and Capacity-Building Initiative on Behalf of Refugee Children and Adolescents*) which is being implemented in cooperation between ISCA and UNHCR. The bibliography can be ordered from Swedish Save the Children.

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Tolfrey, David: *Restoring Playfulness, Different Approaches to Assisting Children who are Psychologically Affected by War or Displacement*, Rädda Barnen, 1996

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