Children and War: Impact, Protection and Rehabilitation
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Dear Friends,

I’m delighted to be able to present to you the report of the first phase of our research project on “Children and War.” About 300 concerned individuals took part in a conference on “Children and War: Impact” at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada from 1-3 April 2004. This conference represented the culmination of the first year of our research project. We present in the pages that follow a summary of the rich presentations made at the conference, beginning with the opening addresses by Mr. Olara Otunnu, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, former Foreign Minister of Canada and current representative for the UN Secretary General in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

I believe that we succeeded in our aim to begin the process of more systematic information-gathering on the multidimensional impact that war has on children. Presenters at the conference were able to offer us a fairly comprehensive picture of the nature and extent of the physical, economic, mental, psycho-social and other impacts of war on children. The picture is a rather bleak one, whether the case study is from Colombia, Sierra Leone, Yugoslavia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Palestine or Western Sahara. The fact remains that despite the existence of ‘paper protection’ (protocols, conventions, treaties, UN resolutions, etc.), children are still being used as war fodder in many parts of the globe. Understanding the severity of the impact of war on children is a first step in getting us to act on this problem.

I encourage you to champion the cause of these victims of war. All children should be allowed to grow up in a safe and secure environment. They ought to be able to enjoy the innocence of youth. They need to be taught the value of resolving conflicts peacefully. After all, children are our future; they are the leaders of tomorrow.

I want to thank all of those who participated in phase one of this project – from research assistants to conference participants, to conference rapporteurs, to community activists. Your input was most valuable. I also take this opportunity to thank Dr. Rod Fraser, President of the University of Alberta, for his commitment to international issues and for providing the kind of intellectual environment on the University of Alberta campus that allows projects such as this one to thrive.

This project could not have been undertaken without the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), United Nations University (UNU) Tokyo, Canadian Consortium on Human Security (CCHS), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Alberta Ministry of Children’s Services, University of Alberta and the Millennium Youth Project. We very much appreciate their contribution and their commitment to eliminating the scourge of war on our children.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Nancy Hanneman for her outstanding project management and to Leslie Weigl, Al Mapara, Nirav Patel, Renee Vaugeois, Gingie Welsh and Megan Murphy for ensuring that the conference ran as smoothly as it did. I could not have done this without their help.

Sincerely,

Dr. W. Andy Knight

McCalla Research Professor
Research Project Director
In spite of past and recent attempts to safeguard the rights of the child and to strengthen the protection regime for children caught in the midst of armed conflicts, children are disproportionately affected – as both targets and perpetrators of violence. Armed conflict traumatizes children, strips them of their innocence, and denies them the protection needed to develop physically, intellectually, spiritually and socially. Today's war-affected child may become a considerable problem for tomorrow's generation. Exposure of children to the atrocities of armed violence can have long lasting, detrimental consequences for future generations, fuelling a continual cycle of societal violence. Children are the future, and if we are to live in a relatively peaceful world, the cycle of violence that is currently affecting them must be broken.

This Children and Armed Conflict project examines the scope of the impact that such violence has on children in order to appreciate fully the extent of their need for protection and rehabilitation. It therefore tackles the problem in three distinct phases over three years:

1) impact,
2) protection, and
3) rehabilitation.

Understanding the scope of the impact will help determine the protection strategies that can minimize or eliminate the suffering such children face and assist in developing effective intervention strategies of rehabilitation.

The comprehensive research agenda will:

- identify critical gaps in knowledge about the scope, nature, and multidimensionality of the impact of armed conflict on children through systematic and careful aggregation and synthesis of available data;
- fill gaps in knowledge by drawing upon emerging data and information gathered by international, regional and local agencies working in conflict and post-conflict societies;
- contribute to the debate between universal and culturally-specific approaches to child protection by critically analyzing both strands of the debate;
- add a new theoretical dimension to child protection issues by shifting focus from ‘rights-based’ international legal principles to ‘obligation-based’ indigenous strategies for guarding against the victimization of children in conflict-ridden societies; and,
- assess a specific set of indigenous intervention strategies for rehabilitating children affected by war – namely the efforts of a Sierra Leone NGO, Children Associated with the War – that contrasts with Western-centric clinical approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration.

PHASE ONE: IMPACT

One of the central goals of the Children and War: Impact Conference was to bring researchers together to answer some of the basic questions that were asked in PHASE I of our research project. These include:

- Who constitutes a “war affected child”? Are boys and girls differentially affected by armed conflict?
- What are the socio-cultural factors and trends in warfare that have made possible the targeting of children during armed conflicts?
- What proportion of civilians affected by war are children?
- What is the nature of their victimization? What has been the physical, economic, mental, psychosocial impact?
- What methods are used to recruit children into armed forces and/or rebel groups (abductions, enticements, threats, peer pressure, cultural sentiments, etc.)?
- To what extent is the proliferation of small arms a factor in exacerbating this problem?
- What has been the impact of landmines, drugs and the illegal trade in minerals and other natural resources on children living in war zones?
- What has been the impact of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases on children during conflicts?
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Year One of the research focused on the collection of documents (primary, secondary, and ‘grey’ material), videos, audio, video and in-person interviews, and on developing links to other projects dealing with the plight of children living in war zones. Materials were gleaned from several countries, from permanent missions to the United Nations system, from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York, and UN depository libraries. A website was created (http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/childrenandwar) and local advisory and international advisory committees were struck to assist in planning an international conference on the theme of “Children and War: Impact” that would be a culmination of the first phase of the project.

The International Centre at the University of Alberta worked closely with both advisory committees to work out the logistics for the conference. Several government officials, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations’ representatives, were consulted in framing the agenda of the conference and in assembling a list of potential participants. The agenda was focused on the multidimensionality of the impact that war has had on children. The potential participants were selected on the basis of their past and current contribution to research and field work dealing with ‘impact’ of war on children. This group therefore was multidisciplinary and diverse in terms of nationality and institutional membership.

The conference took place in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada at the University of Alberta from 1-3 April 2004. What follows is a synopsis of that meeting. The conference opened on 1 April with welcomes from the University’s Chair of the Board of Governors, Jim Edwards, and from the Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Arts, Lynn Penrod. This was followed by a word of greetings from President Kabbah of Sierra Leone via one of his Ministers of government, Madam Shirley Gbujama. The highlight of the evening were inspiring keynote addresses from Olara Otunnu, the UN Secretary-General Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, former Foreign Minister of Canada and current President of the University of Winnipeg. Dr. Andy Knight provided background information on the project and set out the goals to be achieved at the conference. The evening was hosted by Jian Ghomeshi, a popular CBC-TV talk show host, and Nazanin Afshin-Jam, the current Miss World – Canada.
OPENING NIGHT

Honourary Keynote Speaker: Olara Otunnu

Good evening to all of you in Alberta, I’m very pleased to greet you. I apologize for not being with you in person, and I’m happy to have a few minutes with you and to have a discussion and have questions and answers as you wish – an interactive dialogue. I’m at your disposal.

W. Andy Knight: Mr. Otunnu, this is Andy Knight and we’re happy to have you, at least your presence here by Telesat. I just have a question to raise with you, maybe we can start the discussion this way. Ever since the Secretary-General appointed you Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict we noticed that you’ve done a great job traveling around the world and raising the profile of this issue. Yet we see a number of countries in civil wars and children in those countries still suffering despite the fact that we have protocols, conventions, and legal mechanisms aimed at protecting those children. I just wondered if you could tell us what you think are the problems and obstacles to the implementation of those protocols and conventions and legal mechanisms?

Olara Otunnu: Well let me begin by saying that actually you, who are in Alberta, and myself, are very lucky to have one person who has played a very special role in terms of the development, the promotion, and the raising of awareness of the issue of the protection of children affected by war, and who devoted considerable political capital and diplomatic capital to this purpose, and continues to do this work today. And that person is of course Minister Lloyd Axworthy who is with you in Alberta. He is the genuine article, so you have the person that you should have, I’m only here to support him.

The work in terms of the protection of children affected by conflict, the genesis of this work goes back before my time. It goes back to the time of Graça Machel who produced a report “The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children.” When the mandate was created and I was asked to take charge, we proceeded in stages. Among the more important tasks was to lay the foundation for raising awareness and to make the world know what we were doing to our children in situations of conflict. It was also very important to begin introducing this issue in key policy and decision-making bodies. We decided to concentrate especially in the peace and security bodies, meaning in the context of the United Nations Security Council – and Minister Axworthy was especially helpful to us in this, both from Ottawa and also through the Canadian delegation in New York – and working with political groups, including the OAS, OSCE, the European Union, OAU (now the African Union).

Very important as well has been the task of strengthening the normative framework for the protection of children, through standards, conventions, and protocols. And because of the last many years of working collectively with many people who are with you in Alberta; governments, NGOs, as well as civil society more broadly, a number of instruments have been put in place. You know them all, I don’t need to rehearse them. Today we can say that, by and large, what we have in terms of standards and instruments, are a very impressive and comprehensive body of instruments, which have raised a certain degree of awareness and given a certain profile to this issue. Having worked together to develop a movement that goes beyond the United Nations, and the rest of civil society, NGOs, regional organizations and governments, a movement for the protection of children affected by conflict has emerged. Having got key decision-making bodies, the Security Council, the European Union, ECOWAS in West Africa – again Minister Axworthy was very much involved with this – how do we now take these gains and translate them into facts on the ground that can help to give protection to children?

How, in other words, do we translate this into an era of application, the application of these standards on the ground? That is really the most important challenge facing us now. We have begun to work on this again together; many of the people working on this are with you in Alberta. First we wanted to be sure that the issue of embarking on an era of application would gain broad acceptance. This has now happened, including in the Security Council, within the United Nations Secretariat, and also within the General Assembly of the United Nations. And then from there, we began to discuss some very specific projects, but most im-
I wanted to ask you about a particular category of children who do not seem to be on the agenda, in the way that I suspect they ought to be, and that is children that have been born into armed conflict as a result of mass rape or sexual exploitation by peacekeepers or foreign occupation forces, and whose human rights are often compromised after the conflict precisely because of stigma attached to them because of their biological origins.

I don’t see any links to these children on your website or those of other child protection organizations. You also mentioned the need to gather data. The Machel study specifically recommends a global, multi-country fact finding study called “Where are the babies” to track these children, concretely. To use the information that they receive as triggers for action, and not simply in terms of lip service, and more declarations and more general resolutions, but in terms of very specific action. And this is something that will involve more of us – at the United Nations, government, civil society, NGOs – everybody has to be involved in this.

We have Minister Gbujama with us from Sierra Leone. We worked very closely together. The children of Sierra Leone are like, perhaps, very few other children elsewhere. They have lived an unbelievable hell for more than a decade. But Sierra Leone is also a place where we now begin to see in terms of the protection, the rehabilitation of children, we begin to see some very important models being put in place in Sierra Leone.

Charli Carpenter: My name is Charli Carpenter. I’m a researcher at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa and it’s a real honour to have this opportunity to address you directly on a topic which I’ve been wanting to ask you a question about for some time.

As you said, and as you recently said to the Security Council, children are now on the international agenda in particular priority issues such as child soldiering and sexual exploitation, trafficking, etc... And now that we’re ready to move on to implementation I wanted to ask you about a particular category of children who do not seem to be on the agenda, in the way that I suspect they ought to be, and that is children that have been born into armed conflict as a result of mass rape or sexual exploitation by peacekeepers or foreign occupation forces, and whose human rights are often compromised after the conflict precisely because of stigma attached to them because of their biological origins.

I don’t see any links to these children on your website or those of other child protection organizations. You also mentioned the need to gather data. The Machel study specifically recommends a global, multi-country fact finding study called “Where are the babies” to track these children, assess their status and fate and evaluate the best practices regarding their protection. So I wondered if you could comment about this category of war-affected child and whether this study is going to be undertaken? If not, why? If so, by whom? And what can your office do to address, or raise awareness of, this issue?
Olara Otunnu: In terms of information and data, our work collectively suffers from the lack of reliable data, information, and scientific analysis, which is why a couple of years ago, I put out a paper on the research agenda for children in armed conflict which has now led to a number of initiatives and I’m delighted that the University of Alberta and the UNU are embarked on this particular project. We need better data in all sorts of areas to inform policy, to inform programs on the ground, to assess better programs, better decision making, you know better than I do, there’s no need to go into detail on that.

On the question you ask about children born in the circumstances you describe, we have not treated this group of children as a separate category. Their conditions are very very particular and vary a little bit from one country to another. We are more familiar for example with the Rwandan situation, and clearly the mother, the child, the siblings, the other relatives, they required very special care, very special counseling, very special acceptance within the community. And I couldn’t give you a general answer which would be much use except to say that definitely one is to tailor policies and programs very much to that category of children.

We, by the way, have been pushing very hard for the international community to focus on all the key areas that express an impact on war on children. Clearly, child soldiers is one, the killing and maiming of children as we saw in Sierra Leone is another, sexual violence directed against women, especially girls, is another, and part of the impact is what you have been describing. Abduction is a very big issue, the exploitation of natural resources in situations, lack of access, there are a number of areas that have been identified, some of which are discussed, by the way, in reports which I hope you have with you.

My report to the General Assembly last year, the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council 2003, and statements that are both made in the Security Council and the General Assembly will outline some of my ideas and thinking with regard to this, so I hope that you’ve got those available with you. I also hope you’ve got available the research agenda paper which may now be dated in some respects, but by and large is still very much what I believe needs to be done.

May I just mention very quickly, the issue, more than reporting, that is a big priority. The issue of the role of civil society at the local level is exceedingly important, which is why I hope that you have with you some important representatives from the front lines, because their capacity, their support for them, and their engagement with us at the international level is exceedingly important if this agenda is going to have sustainability in the long term. I feel that we haven’t done enough to support local civil society networks, and national and sub-regional levels.

I also feel that it is very important for us to work (and do more to mainstream) to consolidate the gains which have been made within the UN, within NGOs, within governments, so that the gains will be more than lip service. They’ll actually become institutionalized and I hope in this phase that we shall very much concentrate on that.

And finally let me say that even though we have a great base and foundation of awareness, by and large indeed, we still have the suffering and victimization of children in situations of conflict, it’s tragic, it’s sad, it’s unfortunate, but terrible things happen in war. We’ve got to shift from that level of awareness to one of outright repudiation of what we are doing to children in situations of conflict, one in which we will say ‘war may be ugly and bad and terrible, but we simply can’t accept that these things are done to our children in situations of conflict’. There’s no excuse. It cannot be done. It cannot be accepted. But, we are not yet there. So we need a certain level, a critical mass of awareness leading to action, beyond what we have at present.
Precious Resources:
The plight of children in conflict zones

So what about this question of children in war? Nazanin [Afshin-Jam], I listened with interest to your comment about the images that have flashed before us in the last few hours, where it seems horrible; ugly. Faces of children who have been drawn into the vortex of a war were responding as many children do to the environment they were in, and it brought to mind a saying that was given to me a few years back on a canoe trip up in Northern Manitoba, where we stopped along the reserves on the Opaskwayak River, Cree nation. I was still foreign minister at the time.

One of the elders, as we were chatting about things, got into a discussion about children. He came out with a simple but provocative saying. Let me recall it verbatim. He said, “In the Cree Nation we believe that a child is a gift from the Great Spirit. We are given the responsibility to raise and care for that child. And since a child is a gift from the Great Spirit, a child is sacred and must be treated with respect and dignity.”

In viewing those images of the children that were projected on the screen earlier, I asked myself how much respect and dignity have those children in those images been given in their lives? What brought them to the stage where the violence, ugliness and fear were so expressive? But we need to know their stories a little bit better. We can’t take the couple second clip or the still photo, which only captures them in an instant, to try to understand what’s happened in their life. And what responsibility do we have for that gift of life that was given to us, all of us?

Now, I thought maybe one way of digging beyond the immediate story is to go into the words of a young woman whose experience as a child soldier was brought home in a report prepared by Human Rights Watch in Colombia. I chair the Human Rights Watch board for the Americas and we were in Colombia last October to deliver this report to the government and various organizations. The report was called “You’ll Learn Not To Cry.” It tells the story, in her own words, of a young thirteen year old girl named Angela and I thought maybe I could read a little of it to you. She said:

“I had a friend Juanita who got into trouble. We’d been friends in civilian life and shared a tent, but then the commander came one day and said it didn’t matter, that I should shoot my friend. She had committed a serious error and had to be killed. And he told me I had to kill her. I closed my eyes and fired the gun, but I didn’t hit her so he told me I had to shoot her again. The grave was nearby and I had to bury her and put dirt on top of her. The commander said you did well enough, but you started to cry. You’ll have to do it again many more times until you learn not to cry.”

It’s a story that is repeated probably a hundred, maybe a thousand times a day in a variety of places around the world where the indomitable spirit of a young girl is being suppressed and violated by an adult in a time of war; in a time of conflict. It’s a disturbing account, but it’s not unique; it’s not unusual; yet, it’s one that many people in this room have not probably seen or heard or experienced themselves.

We’ve heard the statistics … about the thousands of children that are recruited into these armed bands. We’ve heard from Shirley [Gbujama] about the enormous trauma that they experience as they go through life. One thing we should understand is that this is not just a chronicle of poor countries or poor children, not just chronicles of those who directly experience war, because now we have all been drawn into that circle.

What happened on September 11th was just another reflection on how we’ve all become drawn into a vortex of hate, violence and mass murder. It’s part of a dark underworld of global systems; predators, gun-runners, child violators, terrorists and exploiters who have used all the modern techniques of modern business and finance and connections. In the same way our banks and our large corporations are able to move goods and services, the arms dealers, drug traffickers and terrorist organizations use exactly the same tools and the same facilities. It’s a mirror image of what we like to preach about in terms of our global integration.

…I’ve heard several times tonight that we who are privileged in a country like Canada maybe really don’t understand just how deep and dark this experience is, but let me tell you, the very same people, the trafficker, the cartels and warlords who exploited and violated the life of young Angela are the very same people who today are
doing the exploitation and violation of young men and women on the east side of Vancouver in the drug trafficking in a part of Canada where we have the highest level of infection of HIV/AIDS virtually in the world. So we can't separate ourselves, we can't say that somehow it's somebody else's problem. We can't say that it belongs to that other country. We can't say it's just where it's war torn. The experience of young Angela is inextricably linked to the young women who migrate into the east side of Vancouver or the many other parts of the city, who are quickly captured, abducted into a life of prostitution, drug addiction and become killed by serial killers, or become abused by the johns, or become intimidated by the police. And we have to understand that behind that all is a network of criminality that last year had a profit margin of $50 billion in Colombia alone, which far surpasses the GDP of almost two-thirds of the world's countries. These covert groups are far more powerful and instrumental than most police forces in most national countries.

And so, the future and the lives of child soldiers in Colombia, or Uganda, or Sierra Leone, or Angola, or wherever, are also tied to our own children. And that's why this conference is important, that's why we're not here just to talk about an academic subject of interest in terms of what we might do for somebody else. We're here to talk about our own security, our own assurance, and our own well-being. And the one thing that is very important that we quickly establish is that the issue we face is not something that can be divided into "them" and "us." One of the great tragedies of our time, emerging out of the counter-terrorism activities since September 11th is that we're dividing the world into "them" and "us."

There's the old Roman notion of Homo Excelsior, where the Roman Empire in its glory would give enormous rights and privileges to those who were citizens, but there was a Homo Excelsior: those who were outside the law. Their lives didn't count, they had no value, they were human beings, they had flesh and they had souls and they had all those things, but they didn't count. And unfortunately, in this day and age, we're living in a time when increasingly we say there are a lot of people who simply don't count. And unfortunately, as you've heard tonight, a lot of them are the most vulnerable and the most innocent and those who can't protect themselves. They are the children who get violated and abducted and one of the things that we have to understand about this is that war itself creates its own constitution.

War is not some separate divisible experience; we're all touched by it. Our human rights are touched by it. The way we live is touched by it. The resources we use are touched by it. The [Maher] Arar case in Canada was a clear sign that in fact, war is changing the fundamental charter of rights in this country. We're turning large numbers of Canadians into second-class citizens simply because we are engaged in a major conflict. I'm not saying that one is better than the other; it's just simply a recognition that once you're into a major conflict and you've declared that kind of battle, it's going to affect the rules and norms by which we live. And that to me, I guess, is a thesis for the conference... we were making enormous progress, during the period that Olara [Otunnu] was talking about. There were substantial important steps taken; the Protocol on Children and the International Convention on the Rights of the Children has had the highest level ratification of any international treaty. And what it did is establish a norm, a standard, a measurement, a threshold, for every single country and every single community to adhere to and we began to attach protocols onto that, protocols on sexual exploitation, on sex tourism, on child soldiers.

But then what happened is we declared "war" on terrorism and we forgot about all the other wars. We forgot about all the other sufferers. We forgot that security is not
We have to start looking at the security of individuals, not of countries. We have to stop talking in the language of national interest and instead talk about the interest of individual protection.

Just simply a matter of those who were badly abused and mutilated in the Trade Centre or Pentagon, but it also involves the Angelas of the world and many others like them.

And that is why when people talk about the notion of human security, let's not build it into some edifice. It is simply an understanding that we tried to make in the Canadian government several years ago when we looked at our foreign policy. It is to say that the traditional notion of security of nation-states, of sovereignty of Westphalian systems where every country under the Charter of the United Nations says you have a right to determine the affairs of how you govern your own people in your own way has a certain inviolate capacity. We said wait a minute, that's not the way the conflicts and wars are occurring now. It's not as much across borders as within borders and can we really tolerate and accept the notion that governments are the most serious terrorists because more people are killed by their own governments than are killed by extra territorials.

I think it's evening out, but the reality is that state terrorism is as violent and as abusive a series of acts as it is by those who are part of the al-Qaeda networks and others. And so we simply said: we have to start looking at the security of individuals, not of countries. We have to stop talking in the language of national interest and instead talk about the interest of individual protection. And it's simple to say, but that was the simple thesis we were working on. Not that we were going to replace nation states and replace the old system, but we had to build on it, we had to evolve it, we had to shift it. We had to adapt so that we could have institutions that would begin protecting people regardless of whether they lived in Colombia, Angola, Bosnia or in Edmonton, Alberta. And it asks that indefinable perhaps most mysterious of all international questions: where do we draw the line for those that we care about and those that we don't? And we all know we care about our own kids and our families and neighborhoods and provinces. And of course we built an enormous system of notions and mystique about our nations. But if there is one thing that the issue of child soldiers tells us about, it is that we can no longer draw those lines.

It draws us into the understanding that we all are beginning to share a sense of global citizenship that means we have obligations and rights that have to be looked at; that we can no longer accept that we draw borders and frontiers in terms of protection. And let me just give you an illustration because this is something that I hope you will take on board.

I've often been accused of being soft on all these things. The right wing guys say Axworthy was soft power, he doesn't count. They forget that I was the Foreign Minister that had to recommend to my own government, during the time of Kosovo, that we militarily intervene. I mean I was asked by the Prime Minister to come before Cabinet and say 'should we go to war or not to protect the people of Kosovo?' That was my judgment and I didn't like doing that and I found it difficult but I did it. I didn't feel comfortable. It bothered me that we could use military power in that kind of way without real rules established. I won't get into all the debates we had at the Security Council, but afterward, I said, you know there is no doubt in my mind that the international community, primarily expressed through membership in the United Nations, is going to have to come to grips with this issue of whether we're prepared to intervene on humanitarian grounds to protect people and overturn the traditional standard notions of sovereignty where we will no longer allow governments to be predators on their own people if the crime is egregious and large and big enough.

But I wasn't smart enough to figure out how to do that, so I set up a commission of people, experts around the world, who met for a year, called the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). It was probably – for somebody that wasn't too smart – the smartest thing I ever did, because that commission came up with an idea and the idea was to say: look, war has changed, security has changed and we have to establish a new principle. We cannot accept sovereignty as the old idea that as long as you do it within your own boundaries you have your own right to do it. We said we now have to establish a sovereignty itself that must be defined as the responsibility to protect. It means that a government is legitimate as long as it protects its own citizens and exercises its sovereign rights. But if it refuses to protect those people, or it can't protect its people, or in fact is the violator of its people, then that's when the international community must decide if they will accept the responsibility to protect.
Now the Commission has set up a whole series of rules, because as we’ve learned in the case of Iraq and other places, you shouldn’t do it unilaterally, on a whim and caprice or on false evidence or made-up and imaginative causes. It has to go through a proper set of thresholds. First you have to prove that there is a major violation taking place and secondly, you have to make sure there is a consensus internationally to intervene.

Of course there have to be thresholds and tests and criteria, but let me tell you, if you’re going to deal with the issue of the protection of children in times of conflict, you’re going to have to establish a fundamental principle which the international community exercises and I would ask you to consider the question of responsibility to protect, because if you don’t have that principle or that idea, you’re going to get all convoluted and tied up and it all will depend on who, what, where and how. And if you accept the principle – and I’m short-handing a lot of this because I’m not here to read you the full report-- but if you accept the principle, certain logical things follow. First, there has to be – and I think that there is an interesting movement that the Secretary General has set up a group now – the reform of the United Nations. If they take on the principle of “responsibility to protect,” it begins to alter the constitution, the charter, where you have to adapt and amend and modify if you take it around that principle and you say does the international community have the capacity to enforce that? Because as Olara said an hour and a half ago, “you can’t have a protocol if you can’t enforce it and if you can’t make it work.”

And sure we can send peacekeepers six months late to Sierra Leone, after the murders have taken place. Or we can let two million people die in the Congo because the Security Council can’t get the political will together to make something happen. And by the way, in 1997, we were responsible for sending an international force into Zaire, into the Congo to stop atrocities from happening and for a variety of reasons, we pulled out. We couldn’t get the backing of our strong allies, the United States and Great Britain. We did not exercise our responsibility at that time. We abandoned them at that time. If you accept the principle, then you have to talk about enforcements, which then takes you onto issues of, are we prepared to give the United Nations enforcement capacity to build this? Are we going to have a blue helmeted constabulary that can go into Iraq when it’s falling apart to protect the United Nations or the Red Cross or the aid workers from being bombed?

I mean, let’s not kid ourselves. Nothing’s going to happen in terms of rebuilding Iraq as long as you can’t bring in the international community to help rebuild it, and there is nobody there to protect them. The U.S. marines are not going to do it and the UN does not have the capacity, and of course the question for Canadians or any other country is whether we are prepared to authorize, to debate, to argue, to begin making a real substantial, diplomatic and political effort to finally say if the principle is to be adopted then we have to make sure that the means are there to make the principle work.

So in your discussions in the next couple of days, this is not just simply a matter of looking at the conditions of children in war. It’s about beginning to examine very carefully and very clearly, what do we do to make sure that we provide that protection that is part of the research and analysis? It is important to look at the outcome and ask: are we prepared at this point in time to take the lead to put some value-added into the system to actually bring about a change in a fundamental international institution? It’s not easy to change institutions, especially international ones, but they do change. And if we’re going to change the notion of war and conflict and establish a new principle, then we also have to carry through.

Let me use another example that Andy [Knight] mentioned briefly – The International Criminal Court (ICC). We put the Rome Statute together in 1998 and helped draft it. It was Canadians who introduced the line that a new element of international crime was the violation of children, especially the use of child soldiers. That was a Canadian part of the statute. Are we now prepared to live up to it? Because the International Criminal Court has said that the very first case that they will take on in terms of indictment involves this issue. But just think what is going to happen when the indictment is made against Joseph Kony and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda. What it is going to say to the world is: you can no longer escape your crimes; you can no longer be inviolate. And for all the skeptics and all the oppo-
I mean what is wrong with our values that we can commercialize war and killing and make huge profits off it, yet we can’t find the resources and connections to invest in peace?

components that say that the international court is irrelevant, that it doesn’t count, that it’s not part of the realpolitik, I can tell you that the motion to indict the violators in Uganda and now in the Congo (for violating children) is one of the most important standards that will be set and the question is: what are we going to do about it? What do we do as an international community to support that motion, to support the court, to bring it to light? Because the other thing that will count which the prosecutor said is, “There’s no point in having me issue indictments against the violators and the LRA if we don’t have an accompanying peace plan at the same time.”

And we have to get over the fact that the Government of Uganda and President Museveni, who are the poster boys in Africa, have tolerated a war for 20 years that their own military actions created. And we’ve recently talked to about 2,000 kids on the street in Freetown, last week there were 15,000 kids in the town of Gulu. They all come out of the camps where there are a million Ugandans today living in the worst kind of conditions. And the kids leave those conditions to go to the town of Gulu to sleep in the alleyways because they’re afraid they’ll be abducted if they stay in the camps. And the international community is not there. The international community dilly-dallies and dances and plays ambiguous games because they don’t want to contest the statement of the Ugandan president who says, “I will look after things.” Are we prepared to take the kind of action and initiative to really exercise the ability to protect? Are we prepared to have the same kind of courage that the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has in bringing those indictments? It remains to be seen. Our own government isn’t doing it. I don’t see any other government doing it, but it is something that can start here, now and in this place and be discussed at the meeting.

Let us come to one other point. I was thinking again of the comments we heard earlier about the participation, or lack of it, in this issue. You may remember when we did conferences on war-affected children in Ghana and Winnipeg. We connected a group of young war children from Sierra Leone and Liberia and other places with Canadian counterparts by Internet and we had them talk to each other about their experiences. This was to me a moving experience, because once the kids stopped talking about the war experience and started talking about what music they liked and how their parents didn’t really understand them too well (I have an 18 year old – I know that, I sympathize). They became young people again. They found some restoration of their youth, their childhood.

We have an enormous potential in today’s world of global communications and media, and young people can begin developing the links and the connections and the networks with other young people around this world. They are going to have a session on this tomorrow. I’m going to ask you to think about something: what will it take, what kind of investment, what kind of resources will it take to be able to hook up and link up and connect young people around the world to talk about their peers who are being abused and violated and tortured and mutilated and abducted and kidnapped? What should we do? What will it take? Why is it that today, we can spend 80 million dollars developing a video game that gets released with big fanfare – and we can’t get 50 thousand dollars to do a peace game in which children around the world can communicate so they can understand what is required. I mean what is wrong with our values that we can commercialize war and killing and make huge profits off it, yet we can’t find the resources and connections to invest in peace? I’m not sure we really examine what it would take for a worldwide network and global education on peace for children between the ages 7 and 14 or 15.
We should also be worrying about how we connect people around the world so they can talk to one another and share their research and share their understanding and conversation. Jim [Edwards] I agree with you, universities have a unique, fascinating role to play, I'm just not sure they're playing it – yet. And maybe in your conference, in your discussions tomorrow you can open up that window a little more.

We could talk about a lot of other items but I think it does come down to a simple question, a choice, and some will and the fact that you are all assembled here shows that there is a commitment. You've got some incredible people who've done amazing research that will inform those discussions and those decisions, but the real issue is how do you translate that into action? How do you build a bridge between the ideas and the policy and the program and the outcome?

How do you take what Shirley [Gbujama] talked about? We were all prepared to be on the front lines to stop the conflict in Sierra Leone, but we're not there where we should be now, helping those children to get jobs and employment and education, like she and her government would like to do.

That to me is the story of what this conference should really be all about, if you don't mind. And I would say this in no way discounts the importance of pulling together the research. One of the things I learned in the Land Mines Campaign was if the International Red Cross had not had a very sensible analytical model of why land mines are no longer a useful weapon, they could never have won the case. If we didn't have the ammunition, they didn't have the wherewithal. But they did the research together – we call it the Bible – and every time we got some ex-Colonels telling us why they needed land mines, we'd just go to page 33 and say well, here is the evidence, here's the research, here's the analysis. You're going to need that, but by itself it's not enough and I would ask you – plead with you – maybe in your discussions to take it to the next step of how do we turn it into building a coalition that involves like-minded governments and engineers and civil groups? How do we turn it into a communications network that connects young people so that they take the responsibility of protecting their own peers? How are we going to turn it into a kind of commitment of resources that allows us to use this magical powerful new multi-media that we have, to link and connect people together? And finally, how do we begin to reform our governance, our own institutions, to allow us to make the decisions that reflect that thinking?

The underlying need of interdependence is that we all share that same fundamental need to be secure. Graham Greene once said that 'every once in a while a window on the future opens up and it’s only those who see the future that step through it’. I think you have a door opening up this weekend, I hope you have the courage to step through it.

Are we prepared to take the kind of action and initiative to really exercise the ability to protect? Are we prepared to have the same kind of courage that the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has in bringing those indictments? It remains to be seen.
Christina Clark “Engaging with children as actors in conflict: A challenge to the prevailing victim-villain dichotomy”

Clark focused on how dominant psychological discourses, and legal definitions of children and civilians, have contributed to a stereotyping of war-affected children and have reified the victim/villain dichotomy. She highlighted the role that children play in conflict and the decision-making process that children go through in becoming soldiers. She reminded the audience that not all children are innocent victims; rather, some make rational decisions to be involved in conflict. Clark argued that in order to truly grasp the effects of war on children, we must critically examine their roles, their decision making process, and their coping strategies. By reconceptualizing children as social, economic and political actors in the context of conflict, Clark helped to paint a more ‘realistic’ picture of the role of children in conflict.

Rachel Brett “Young Volunteer Soldiers or Child Soldiers: Why Adolescents Volunteer”

One of the central objectives of Rachel Brett’s presentation was to further deconstruct the simplified victim/villain dichotomy associated with children and warfare. Brett argued that “society tends to pigeonhole these youngsters as either traumatized victims or deviant villains, but the reality is much more complex.” Brett told a chilling story of two Congolese girls. Both had been raped and, in their efforts to stop their perpetrators from victimizing others, they shot the two men. They justified their actions by stating, “if it wasn’t them that time, it would have been the next.” To avoid marginalizing their experiences and disempowering them further, Brett encouraged the researching community to view children as actors in war, rather than victims. Brett concurred with Christina Clark that children often join armies “for very normal reasons” such as economic and family considerations, protection, and education.

Bintu Magona “Street Children and War-Affected Youth”

Bintu Magona discussed her experience in researching street children in Sierra Leone. The war of 1991 in Sierra Leone left 80,000 people dead and it is estimated that 10,000 children were abducted and used as sex slaves and soldiers. The National Commission for War Affected Children in Sierra Leone surveyed 9,955 street children and war-affected children following the war. Magona relayed the story of these street children and explained the findings of her research. Her findings demonstrated that some of the deepest scars children exhibited were not from physical wounds, but from depression, stress and fear: “most of the children were so afraid.” This fear has prevented many street children from gaining any self-confidence. Some of their experiences, including witnessing family members being tortured or killed, have been so traumatic, “many of them say they just want to die.” Magona’s organization works to heal the physical and emotional wounds of these children by caring for them and providing safe shelter until they can support themselves or be reunited with family members.
Dr. Joel Oestreich “Measuring the Impact of War on Children: What Do We Know? What Can We Know?”

Dr. Oestreich presented a highly critical methodological paper on measuring the impact of war on children. He problematized the methods in which statistical data relating to children and war is gathered and analyzed. The usefulness of basic concepts like ‘impact’ and ‘child’ was shown to be highly questionable. According to Oestreich, even the United Nations’ statistic 300,000 child soldiers globally is not based on reliable sources and has not changed since the Machel report in 1996. Oestreich raised awareness of the motivation and methods by which NGOs compile and report statistics on children. Oestreich also noted that the various ways that data is used influence the ways in which it is collected and how the terms are operationalized. He warned that we should not ignore the plethora of factors relating to data on children and war, including complicated webs of cause and effect.

Dr. Pamela Reynolds “The Infliction of Pain on the Young: Resistance and Retaliation”

Dr. Reynolds drew on her extensive fieldwork in Southern Africa which explored issues having to do with children’s cognition, labour, healing, and involvement in conflict. Currently she is working with the SSRC/UNO Project on Children in Armed Conflict; a NIDA study of Adolescent Girls with HIV; a Rockefeller Foundation Research Study of children in situations of violence and poverty, called “Child on the Wing”; and she is writing a book on young people’s stand against apartheid. At this session Reynolds examined the harm done by the State to the young people in South Africa during the struggle against apartheid. She revealed how damage to the young is often obscured and how difficult it is to document what pain is covertly or overtly inflicted.

Dr. Kambeze Etemad “The Damage and Salvage of Human Capacity: an Integrated Approach to Armed Conflict”

Drawing upon established concepts and findings from various disciplines, and speaking from a medical practitioner’s vantage point, Dr. Etemad offered an integrated picture of the human experience, particularly as encountered by children, and of their resultant vulnerability and resilience in the face of war. Etemad examined the meaning and nature of human capacity by considering the personal reality of individuals and individual interactions with, and integration in, their environment. He offered a set of questions and principles to stimulate reflection and dialogue in attempts to transcend the biases of our respective cultures and fields, and ultimately translate into an ever-evolving “working model” for in-the-field application of sensitive, targeted, and essential responses to the tragedy of children and war.
Dr. Michael Wessells “Understanding the Psychosocial Impact of War on Children: A Holistic Approach”

Dr. Wessells noted that the achievement of an accurate understanding of the impact of war on children is necessary for guiding the construction of comprehensive, sustainable interventions to support war-affected children. Unfortunately, many studies and portrayals of the psychosocial impact have been too limited in scope. His presentation identified gaps in contemporary analyses of the psychosocial impact of war and proposed a more holistic framework for understanding “impact.” His perspective is a direct response to concerns with current research approaches that are limited in scope and do not bring forward children’s voices and agency. Wessells identified gender bias, excessive individual focus, deficits emphasis, insufficient attention to culture, and excessive focus on past violence, as the five gaps that exist in contemporary analyses of the psychosocial impact of war on children. Following this critique, he provided a holistic, culturally grounded framework for conceptualizing the impact on children. This framework was developed by the Mellon Psychosocial Working Group. Its holistic approach looks at the interplay between an Impacted Community and External Community (e.g. NGOs) through programming interactions following events. Wessells highlighted three areas which he sees as vital to this holistic approach: (1) Human Capacity (2) Social Ecology and (3) Cultural Values.

Dr. Tara Ney “Education for Peace Project in Bosnia”

Dr. Ney’s presentation centred on a psychosocial intervention project set to be launched in Bosnia. Underlying this project is the assumption that holistic approaches to psychosocial intervention (those that combine cultural sensitivities and developmental capacities) also need to address sources of conflict. In response to this challenge, the current project in Bosnia asks whether children can learn new skills that could inoculate them from future conflict. The Bosnia project involves (1) working with youth and educators in schools to understand children’s world views that give rise to conflict and how to engage in conflict resolution, and (2) the use of restorative justice models. Ney emphasized the need to provide children with skills to deal with conflict, the importance of understanding world views that give rise to conflict, and the role of cultural views of how one deals with conflict.
Plenary Session 4: Infrastructure Casualties: Education and Healthcare, etc.

Chair: Dr. Nancy Gibson


Ms. Kanji’s description of post-conflict Afghanistan demonstrated the undeniable reality of how international interference motivated by greed and exploitation of natural resources has reduced Afghanistan’s capacity to address its problems. Kanji delineated the devastation of Afghanistan’s infrastructure. There is neither electricity nor water, very poor hospital facilities, where they exist at all, and 70% of schools have been burned during the Taliban rule. Currently 1.5 million children in Afghanistan cannot attend school, 40% have lost a parent, 50% stated that fear was their most frequent emotion, and 90% believed they would die before adulthood. Afghanistan has the world’s largest refugee population and the highest child mortality and child malnutrition rate. Add to that the difficulties of access due to lack of adequate roads, the difficulties of landmines and resultant injuries, and the great numbers of orphans partly cared for by impoverished adults who barely have enough resources to feed themselves, and you have a portrait of how Afghan children are teetering on the brink of survival.

Dr. Antonio Donini “Afghanistan Post 9/11”

Dr. Donini spoke of the irony of post-conflict terminology that assumes a given conflict has abruptly ended and that people are free to begin rebuilding their lives. Afghanistan was presented as the first example of a post 9/11 world ordering. Difficulties with this so-called ordering, however, can be seen in the hotbeds of continued instability waiting to catch fire. Donini argued that in most war-torn countries, the lack of attention to the causes of conflict, and the possibility of resurgence, fuels conditions which inspire a return to conflict. He articulated an extremely insightful methodological point: using children as a unit of analysis to capture the complexity of the country’s issues is not necessarily useful in programming work since a child is a part of a family, a community and a region and not an isolated phenomenon. Donini concluded that there is no “post” to a conflict until a sustained peace is achieved and subsequent re-establishment of infrastructure occurs.

Dr. Ryan Meili “A Message from Mozambique: The Impact of Conflict on Health Infrastructure and Consequently, Kids”

Ryan Meili spoke about his role in the Massinga Hospital in Mozambique where he experienced first hand the effects of fractured infrastructure on the health of children. Meili’s presentation highlighted the obstacles to any minimal standard of health care for citizens of Mozambique. The country currently suffers from an infrastructure deficit that was demonstrated to the audience in the example of THRP – a medical facility with only two doctors and a handful of high school nurses who are expected to serve the needs of over 200 thousand citizens. THRP’s tiny hospital has not seen improvements or additions since the early 1900s and, out of desperation, employs medical staff with inadequate training. The complications of poverty, war, HIV/AIDS, and global programs that further oppress the poor make it almost impossible for Mozambique to affect any significant gains that would address the basic health and education needs of its people.

Meili recounted a touching story about the tender attention of an HIV/AIDS infected father towards his young daughter while, in struggling to bear the insertion of a scalp needle for a blood transfusion, calmed the child with a story of her imaginary pet goat, Calibrito. The story served to illustrate that in spite of the complicated ravages of HIV/AIDS in Mozambique, people care deeply about their children and do their utmost to provide for their families. At the close of his presentation, Meili reiterated that public infrastructures must be established and maintained in order for children to be safe and healthy. The lack of international attention paid to suffering children and their families in Mozambique reflects an inequity that can only be addressed with corresponding peace work and justice.

For more information on health projects such as the Massinga program in Mozambique, view website: http://www.usask.ca/healthsci/che/prhpcr/thrp/thrp.html
Jean-Pierre Mulago Shamvu “The Impact of Small Arms Trade on Children”

Shamvu discussed the impact of the small arms trade on children in war torn countries. He focused his presentation on the argument that the illicit trade of small arms exacerbates the already existing problem of child soldiers. Illicit trade provides easy access to weapons and ammunitions. Those who take advantage of this access are not necessarily responsible governments, but very often are failed states -- those governments facing legitimacy crises coupled with political and economic difficulties. Shamvu pointed out that there are also warlords, factions’ leaders, organized crime and all kind of recruiters who make their business out of waging wars. Shamvu noted that small arms are very often easy to handle even by non-professional soldiers. They are easy to assemble and maintain even by a seven or eight year old child! Therefore the use of children as soldiers is ‘productive.’

Small arms are also a challenge to DDRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reinsertion) programs. During the rehabilitation process, former combatants learn skills like carpentry, mechanics, etc. After graduation from training institutions, children face limited job opportunities in their countries or insufficient income from them. Hence the temptation to return to guns looms large.

Megan Murphy “Human Security as a Framework for the Theme Children of War”

Murphy discussed notions surrounding the need to unify research around the multi-faceted nature of the impact of war. She reminded the audience of Lloyd Axworthy’s opening remarks at the conference encouraging the use of Human Security as a framework for discussions of children and war. Furthermore, Murphy discussed the link between HIV/AIDS infection rates in soldiers, the use of sexual violence during conflict, and HIV infected babies born as a result of mass rape. She argued that human security provides the ‘holistic approach’ that Wessells, Etemad, and other presenters were calling for. Specifically, she maintained that state security means nothing without individual security and that academics can unify their research and analyses so that security concerns reflect the people who are affected, not simply the states.

Tanya Narozhna “Impact of Chechen Wars on Children”

Narozhna’s presentation used the Human Security lens to examine Chechnya, and the long battle being fought by a once giant super power and its satellite. She spoke about the specific atrocities occurring in Chechnya at the hands of warlords and the terrorist activities of Russian state actors. She demonstrated that the impact of this war on children is tremendous, with such consequences as refugees, sexual assaults and, child soldiers. Narozhna pointed out that the Chechen war is being waged between a state and rebels, in which there is little mention of the violence committed against children. She proposed that reorganizing security as a concept in international relations allows children to be recognized both as participants of war and as those who deeply suffer its consequences.
Dr. Susan McKay “Researching War’s Impacts: What About the Girls in Fighting Forces?”

Dr. McKay discussed the impact of demobilization and reintegration programs on women and girls. She criticized the ways that these programs ignore the various needs of women and their inability to prepare communities for the reintegration of former soldiers. She called attention to the word ‘sensitization’ -- a buzzword that indicates the promotion of awareness about children and women’s rights. She argued that in reality this ‘promotion’ is “seldom more than a PR (public relations) job that often isn’t very well done.” She called for programs to be more results-driven and demanded evidence of real behavioural changes in the way communities respond to returning child soldiers.

Elise Barth “Fighter Girls in Eritrea’s Liberation War”

Barth unraveled the story of Eritrea’s liberation war from Ethiopia which lasted for 30 years. She revealed the astonishing fact that one third of the fighters were women, and many of them were extremely young. These girls were greatly impacted by their involvement in conflict, their socialization into the guerrilla forces at such a young age, and the loss of their family ties. Barth explained the vast differences in how male and female soldiers were included in the conflicts and then later reintegrated. Men were expected to get involved in conflict, were commended for their activity, and more easily included in civil society during and after the war. Conversely, women were expected to take on new roles as fighters and thus, isolate themselves from civil society.

Vivi Stavrou “Breaking the Silence: Girls Abducted During Armed Conflict in Angola”

Stavrou spoke of her role as director of the Christian Children’s Find in Angola, a CIDA-funded research project that examines girls and their experiences in the conflict in that country. This project seeks effective strategies to increase the protection and aid required by formerly abducted girl soldiers, and to contribute to their integration when they seek to return to their families or to a place where they can try to rebuild their lives. Stavrou explained how the project uses in-depth research to gain a greater understanding of the nature of formerly abducted girl soldier’s war experiences, the impact of their war experiences on their subsequent integration into community life, and the current coping strategies used to facilitate their integration into community life.

From her standpoint as a practitioner, Stavrou articulated how insufficient understanding of the impact of armed conflict on girls and their role in peace-building, undermines political, policy and programme approaches.
Hamidu Jalloh “The Multi-Dimensional Impact of War on the Children of Sierra Leone”

Jalloh focused his presentation on the situation of children who are internally displaced or forced into refugee camps. He began by giving a background of the history of the conflict in Sierra Leone. There are around 60,000 internally displaced people and refugees in this country and the refugee camps lack food and resources. Two fates are common for children between the ages of 0-10: either they die from the proliferation of diseases or they are forced into child labour and face domestic violence. Nevertheless, Jalloh still managed to shed a positive light in his presentation by talking about the success of reintegration programs which have worked with 55,000 war-affected children in 2,000 locations in Sierra Leone.

Guillermo Gonzalez Uribe ‘Political Reality and Social Conflict in Colombia: The Children of War’

Guillermo Gonzalez Uribe began his presentation by describing the country of Colombia, tracing its domestic conflict back through the historical development of the country. He described how both sides of the conflict target civil society: the paramilitaries on the one side, funded largely by the drug trade, and the government on the other side, supported by the USA. He explained that there are an estimated 12,000 children involved in the war there. By recounting his experiences with the program he is involved with in Colombia, Uribe was able to explain what compelled children to join the war. Lack of opportunities, abuse, and severe poverty were the major themes in this presentation.

Uribe’s contribution greatly impacted the participants at this conference. He complimented the theoretical presentations with his ability to paint a picture of the ‘reality’ of war for children in his country.
Dr. Constantine Danopoulos “Children and Armed Conflict: The Yugoslav Experience”

Dr. Danopoulos relayed his experience as an election observer for the United Nations in Bosnia where he gained knowledge of children affected by the war. Danopoulos described the division line that ran through the Balkans between Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics. He emphasized the effects on children of using religion as a defining characteristic of one’s identity. Many of the people in this area had defined themselves by ‘what they were not.’ Bosnia was left in the middle of these divisions with its mix of different ethnicities (Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Muslims). Danopoulos also expressed how women and children were subjected to the brunt of the war in Bosnia. He raised vital questions relating to security, defining societal security as relating to the identity of a group of people. He argued that societal insecurity breeds human insecurity and concluded that one of the major concerns for this region is that governments and institutions are still using state-oriented security approaches.

George Songaye Buannie “Addressing the Impact of War on Children in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone”

Buannie echoed other presenters’ recommendations for a holistic approach to understanding the impact that war has on children. His presentation emphasized the need to examine the pre-war period in Sierra Leone and to consider consistencies between societal behaviour before and after the conflict. He argued that wars do not spring up overnight but are manifested by certain conditions. He defined war not just as the presence of conflict but also as the dehumanization of humanity. Buannie outlined four major players who create an impact on children in war: arms suppliers, diamond buyers, sanctions, and NGOs. Buannie also raised the need to establish relationships of trust and pointed out that self-defence mechanisms in children can prohibit this trust. Among Buannie’s most insightful comments was his problematization of the fact that human rights organizations and NGOs only examine conditions during wars in Africa. He warned that if the right steps are not taken in Sierra Leone to examine the underlying causes of conflict, the cycle of violence would be repeated.

Hilary Homes “Small Warriors, Big War: Children and the Continuing Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo”

Ms. Homes used the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a case study to look at ‘the big picture’ surrounding children and war including the justice system and economic exploitation. She described the history of the conflict in the DRC and the gravity of the current cycle of conflict, emphasizing the fact that all sides to the conflict have used child soldiers. Homes described the difference – or lack thereof – between those child soldiers who were forced to join armies and those who ‘volunteered.’ Homes went into detail about the deplorable conditions of combat citing cases of torture, rape, food deprivation, and the high mortality rates. She delineated the demobilization process in the DRC and discussed some of the problems endemic to this process. She argued that there is not much ‘process’ to simply releasing children onto the streets. Further, there is a high risk of re-recruitment if demobilization is not handled properly. She suggested a need for detailed analyses of the children involved in combat and a method of tracking them during the demobilization process.

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Buannie echoed other presenters’ recommendations for a holistic approach to understanding the impact that war has on children. His presentation emphasized the need to examine the pre-war period in Sierra Leone and to consider consistencies between societal behaviour before and after the conflict. He argued that wars do not spring up overnight but are manifested by certain conditions. He defined war not just as the presence of conflict but also as the dehumanization of humanity. Buannie outlined four major players who create an impact on children in war: arms suppliers, diamond buyers, sanctions, and NGOs. Buannie also raised the need to establish relationships of trust and pointed out that self-defence mechanisms in children can prohibit this trust. Among Buannie’s most insightful comments was his problematization of the fact that human rights organizations and NGOs only examine conditions during wars in Africa. He warned that if the right steps are not taken in Sierra Leone to examine the underlying causes of conflict, the cycle of violence would be repeated.

Hilary Homes “Small Warriors, Big War: Children and the Continuing Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo”

Ms. Homes used the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a case study to look at ‘the big picture’ surrounding children and war including the justice system and economic exploitation. She described the history of the conflict in the DRC and the gravity of the current cycle of conflict, emphasizing the fact that all sides to the conflict have used child soldiers. Homes described the difference – or lack thereof – between those child soldiers who were forced to join armies and those who ‘volunteered.’ Homes went into detail about the deplorable conditions of combat citing cases of torture, rape, food deprivation, and the high mortality rates. She delineated the demobilization process in the DRC and discussed some of the problems endemic to this process. She argued that there is not much ‘process’ to simply releasing children onto the streets. Further, there is a high risk of re-recruitment if demobilization is not handled properly. She suggested a need for detailed analyses of the children involved in combat and a method of tracking them during the demobilization process.

Two fates are common for children between the ages of 0-10: either they die from the proliferation of diseases or they are forced into child labour and face domestic violence.
Alejandro Bendaña “Learning from the Nicaraguan Experience”

Bendaña examined the failures and consequences of demobilization and reintegration programs in Nicaragua. He explained the history of Nicaragua’s experience with war between 1977 and 1990 and told the audience that a high percentage of the fighters on contending sides were adolescents. Bendaña criticized demobilization and reintegration programs for their inability to deal specifically with the needs and characteristics of the adolescent combatants. He also problematized several distinctions that are made in relation to children and war. The first is between child and adolescent participants in the war. The second is between victims of war and willing participants in war. He argued that the categories of abduction, coercion and volunteer also demand closer scrutiny. Bendaña warned researchers to avoid tendencies to generalize on the basis of well-known experiences and national cases.

Christine Tokar “Learning from the Sierra Leonean Experience”

Ms. Tokar’s presentation on rehabilitation programs in Sierra Leone was based on her personal experiences within the country. Tokar explained the effects of the ten-year war on the children of Sierra Leone and spoke of her role in the Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR) program there. This program was conceived by the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) and supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. According to Tokar, the psycho-social support and the staff’s mediation with their families and communities have helped bridge acceptance in local communities. Further, gaining new skills and knowledge have helped many children gain a new “sense of themselves.” Tokar reminded the audience that the sustainable effects of rehabilitation are dependent upon other factors such as, long-term support and funding, and the cessation of conflict and restoration of peace not only in Sierra Leone but also in neighbouring countries.

Paula Klassen “Amahoro Meza/ Happy Peace: A Personal Account of Teaching in War-Torn Rwanda”

Paula Klassen gave an emotional account of her experience as a Teacher Trainer in Rwanda after the genocide. As a recent graduate of the University of Alberta, Paula departed for Rwanda for a two-year experience as a volunteer with the British NGO Voluntary Services Overseas. Placed in the small northern village of Byumba, Paula experienced personally the lingering remnants of the 1994 genocide. Her experience tells the tale of the irony of the enduring ‘Devil’ within the country, as General Romeo D’Allaire once described, and the pristine beauty of the land and strength and perseverance of the people. Paula also brought to light the difficulties and dilemmas involved in post-war rehabilitation and reconciliation that are often overlooked by NGOs. Her lesson brings home the importance of contextualizing and humanizing the experience of working in a post-war situation. Understanding the individual and social history and empathizing with this is a fundamental aspect of building bridges in a culture embedded with hate and distrust.

The visual signs of the war in Rwanda could be seen daily, if not in the physical scars born by her students or colleagues then, in the emotional and psychological trauma that had drained the life from them. Paula told the story of a young boy named Frederick who had lost both his arms above the elbow during the war and of his amazing strength and resiliency in adapting to the post-war situation. She also spoke of the paradox in the smiles on the faces of people who were physically scarred during the war. She discussed the strangeness of looking at the everyday ‘somewhat’ normal life of Byumba and then being reminded consistently and in small ways of the brutality of the war. Here is one example in her own words:

“I remember invigilating exams. As I was walking through the rows, I can still see clearly one student’s head bent over writing an exam. He had a huge scar at the back of his head. He had clearly received a powerful blow of a machete. And there he was… not lying in a pool of blood left to die but one of my students deep in concentration writing an exam.”
Binta Mansaray “The Experience of War-Affected Girls in Sierra Leone”

Binta Mansaray, who has served as a consultant to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, examined the situation of former child soldiers through a gendered lens. Mansaray critiqued the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program in Sierra Leone for its gender bias. She argued that most women and girls fall through the cracks of this program due to their subordinated status in the conflict. Further, even if they are included in the program, these women and girls are often forced into gender-specific roles that do not meet their needs: “Most organizations, most child protection agencies, what do they do? Soap making…the same old gender skills.” Mansaray asserted that many women who have participated in conflict have “defied gender stereotypes” and do not want to return to their traditional roles.

Dr. Kassu Gebremariam “Children in Situations of Armed Conflict and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Case of Ethiopia and Eritrea”

Kassu Gebremariam has done extensive research on the peacebuilding process in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, and Egypt) and on the role of agents such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development (IADD). In his presentation, Dr Gebremariam shared his first-hand knowledge of these regions and expressed criticism of the slow advances being made in the area of post-conflict reconstruction. Gebremariam also questioned the way in which human rights are being promoted in this area, and whether the proper protection of children in armed conflict has been a priority. Gebremariam stressed the importance of indigenous knowledge and solutions for citizens of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Dr. Randa Farah “The Impact of Prolonged Conflict on Children in Palestine and the Western Sahara”

Dr Farah’s presentation built upon an innovative theoretical and practical study on the effects of forced migration and prolonged conflict on children and adolescents in Palestinian households. Dr. Randa Farah shared the findings of her various research projects with the audience in Edmonton. These projects include a completed regional and long-term study on the impact of prolonged conflict on Palestinian refugee children. Her presentation reflected her interest in the areas of conflict and displacement, children and youth, memory/history and identity, nations and nationalism, and humanitarian aid.

The visual signs of the war in Rwanda could be seen daily, if not in the physical scars born by her students or colleagues, then in the emotional and psychological trauma that had drained the life from them.
Curious about the impact of the war on the children in Iraq, Jasper Junior High students approached their teacher Paula Klassen for insight. Although she had no connection to Iraq, in light of her experience in Rwanda, Paula encouraged her Jasper students to build linkages with Rwandan students to develop an understanding of war. Through this initiative, in December 2003, the Jasper students wrote letters to the English Club of Groupe Scolaire del Salle in Byumba to ask them to paint or write their vision of peace. The Jasper group received a compilation of artwork and writing that showed the complexity of the impact of war as well as the adversity and strength of Rwandan youth.

Four students from Jasper - Lauren Carter, Bill Currie, Kayleigh Key, and Noreen Shaikh - submitted a group essay to the CIDA-sponsored Butterfly 208 contest. The goal of Butterfly 208 is to enhance the human connection between Canadian youth and those from the remaining 208 countries around the world as well as to articulate the potential impact of local small actions globally. The overarching goal of the Jasper students in their essay was to bring together the voices of Canadians and Rwandans to express their feelings on how war and peace have affected them and what they think should be done about both. The students claimed first prize for the group essays in this competition.

For more information, see:

The Jasper students have displayed the Rwandan artwork throughout Jasper and, at the conference, Paula showcased the art for participants as well. It is the wish of the Jasper students to give the courageous Rwandans a voice and to raise awareness regarding the impact and devastation of war. We have chosen to showcase some of this artwork throughout the report.
Helping to shed further light on the issue of children born as a result of rape during warfare, the documentary ‘War Babies’ was shown on the final evening of the conference.

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The Youth Millennium Project (YMP) was designed to give youth worldwide, ages 10-22, an opportunity to contribute to global development in their own way, on their own terms. We saw the need, and we made it happen with over 50,000 kids to date. This past year, using participatory research, YMP created a youth-developed peacebuilding curriculum that allows kids to not only learn about community development but also lead it; it was launched in 35 countries this past fall. Our programming is based on 5 years of field research from Vancouver to Sri Lanka, Uganda to Sweden, and on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. YMP is based at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

Dr. Andy Knight asked the Youth Millennium Project to help lead activities for the youth portion of the “Children and War: Impact” conference. The day-long workshop focused on Youth Leadership in Peacebuilding: Taking Ideas into Action.

What does it mean to be a global citizen and build peace? The Youth Millennium Project today engages youth in 82 countries not only to participate in, but also to lead major change in their communities, from environmental protection in Taiwan to educational development in Uganda to literacy in Guyana. The result? Decreasing fear and increasing the peace. The workshop helped youth find the tools within themselves to become a force for global leadership in their community, and around the world.

The workshop strove to achieve two things:

1. Shed light on the lives and experiences of children and youth affected by war;

2. Explore the three major facets of becoming a youth peace leader: leading awareness, leading assistance, and leading activity.

The day’s activities were led by a keynote address from 16-year-old youth activist Jason Crowe. Jason is a high school senior from Newburgh, Indiana, where he also has attended the University of Southern Indiana since he was 14. He has been an activist since the age of nine, touching more than 100,000 young people through his projects. He has personally devoted over 9,000 hours of service in the past 8 years and has raised over $180,000 for charities.

Participants were introduced to a brief history of the causes of war as experienced by youth, facilitated by two extraordinary young women from Liberia who were personally affected by war in very different ways. Veronica Fynn outlined her experiences as an internally-displaced child, and her personal victory in achieving an education against all odds. Kade Hardy gave a heartbreaking account of her own flight from the conflict, and the death of her father at the hands of rebel forces. The purpose of sharing these stories was not to shock, but to embrace these young people’s strength, survival and hope for the future of their home communities by building bridges with other youth, in Canada and worldwide.

Alfred Orono, a former Ugandan child soldier, gave a stirring account of his experience and stood as an example of hope – that war-affected children can emerge from their terrible experiences to become successful adults. Alfred is now a
lawyer working with the Justice Department in Ottawa.

The main event of the afternoon focused on developing youth-led ideas around three key Peace Challenge principles:

• Leading Awareness: Inspiring others to work for peace
• Leading Assistance: Creating shared resources
• Leading Action: Making a difference to build peace

Participants were able to break off into groups and develop their own plan to make positive change towards a more peaceful society within the Edmonton community. The onus was to incorporate ideas that took into consideration the bigger picture: addressing the causes of conflict rather than developing band-aid solutions.

Youth have the most important role in leading peace efforts in our communities. Youth have few preconceptions about what it means to create a peaceful community, but at the same time, are frustrated. Our research has shown that, despite a keen understanding of world issues, youth perceive that only adults in leadership positions are allowed to enact community or international change. When given the opportunity to contribute, however, youth participation in peacebuilding can have both immediate and long-reaching positive effects.

Peace Challenge, and this conference, embraced a broad definition of peace: it is not simply the absence of war; it is the absence of fear. When communities are in need, when people don’t have enough to eat, when there is a lack of clean water, people fear for their survival. The result of fear is often a power struggle that causes confusion, anxiety, and disputes over scarce resources which can lead to conflict and war. Building peace is challenging, and is present in all disciplines of study, and there is a complex connection between addressing peacebuilding at the community level – even in communities without visible conflict – and making global changes.

The result of this youth conference was significant. Together, youth shared ideas and created a new support network for global conflict resolution. They made a commitment to understand the experiences of other youth affected by conflict. Finally, participants began to explore what peace means to them, and how to take their ideas, beliefs and values around peace and conflict and put them into a solid plan of action in their communities.

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The Children Affected by the War Benefit Concert

Showcased Juno nominees BrassMunk and numerous local acts who donated their rhythm and energy to the cause: Politic Live, Vizion, Emcee E, Coalition for Refugee Thought; dance performances by the Soul Jazz Step Team, K2 hip hop dancers, and Freshly Squeezed break dancers; and DJs Shortround and Echo.

Consistent with the theme of the conference, the event was open to all ages. Over 200 participants ranging from small children scampering across the dance floor to Father Momoh – director of Sierra Leone’s ‘Children Associated with the War (CAW)’ organization – himself, grooved to the hip hop beats and rhythms. Father Momoh’s organization helps to rehabilitate child soldiers and reintegrate child ex-combatants back into their communities and families. This benefit event was geared towards several goals – to wrap up the Youth Conference, to raise community awareness, and to make a monetary contribution to ‘CAW.’ Inspired by War Child’s Musicians in the War Zone initiative, we were bringing light to the issue of war-affected children through music and performance, to the Edmonton community.

Pictures are at http://www.ualberta.ca/~jwg2/impact/impact.htm
Young boys and girls forced to become child soldiers; commonly involved in drug-induced killing and mutilations; female victims of rape and slavery...these were distressingly common stories that were revealed in interviews with children and women in Cambodia and Sierra Leone.

Research Highlights

"Young boys and girls forced to become child soldiers; commonly involved in drug-induced killing and mutilations; female victims of rape and slavery...these were distressingly common stories that were revealed in interviews with children and women in Cambodia and Sierra Leone. Add to these, cannibalism, torture, the systematic annihilation of local cultural and ethical mores and the long-lasting suppression of traditional community structures and support and you have the abundant and infamous fruits of war."

The research component of Sandra's project yielded first hand accounts of horrific trauma inflicted on individuals during and after years of conflict. The recorded interviews reflected the following human security concerns:

1. Absence of protection from violent conflict
2. Lack of security due to the violence of armed force
3. Forced migration from homes
4. Forced break-ups of family and community units
5. Continued state of poverty resulting in part from the devastation of community and institutional infrastructure
6. Corporate and government corruption - both foreign and local-based (which delays the improvement of economic growth and the ability to earn an above poverty-line livelihood)
7. An almost complete lack of access to medical support and medicine
8. Disruption of education

In both Cambodia and Sierra Leone her interviewees recalled extreme fear of being brutalized or killed. The right to live was decided in many cases by a finger on the trigger and the whim of the regime in control. All were threatened at gunpoint and all were forced to flee or move from their homes. Most lost all of their possessions and usually family members were separated. Fear, hunger and desperation haunted them while on the move.

Most never returned to their original homes (many of which were destroyed or taken over by others). The majority of interviewees' present post-conflict lives are difficult. Most live in extreme poverty, have no access to medical help, worry about their physical safety and have lost their trust in the support of the community structure.
Learning Through Art

The art component of Sandra’s work is focused on creating an awareness of the plight (and need) of women and children and to highlight particular policy issues. Sandra points out that art is one of the most effective ways to provoke questions and stimulate dialogue about issues and solutions. It has the ability to penetrate the emotions as well as the intellect.

1. The *simple truth* artwork focuses on the holistic story of what is lost in war. The words of six Cambodian women tell of the fear and burdens of conflict. The physical appearance of the exhibit is created to draw the viewer into the life of the individual Cambodian woman – to create a tangible association – to cross borders and cultures. The sound component (the women’s stories) presents the reality of what we lose in and after war. There is no stronger and more poignant voice about the loss of human security than one who has lived through it.

2. The *Robbed* artwork investigates and exposes the special protective needs of female children and women living in conflict and post conflict settings. Four young Sierra Leonean women tell of their young lives before and after they were abducted and used as sex and labour slaves. Related war stories of armed violence, rape, pregnancy from rape (the resulting living children face community ostracism), slavery, separated or killed family members, disruption of education and present post war poverty for them and their children tell of the special burden that women and female children have to shoulder in conflict ridden countries.

3. The artwork *Innocent* looks at the victimization of children in war. This artwork is about four youths who were abducted by rebel forces when they were young children. The two boys became child soldiers; the two girls became labor slaves and upon reaching puberty also became sex slaves. This exhibit provokes questions about the blurred boundary between victim and perpetrator and about the special need to protect all children in war zones.

4. Artwork four – presently untitled – is about the stripping of human rights through armed violence. Images of women and children from Cambodia and Sierra Leone are “guarded” by military rifles in this exhibit. The contrast between the vulnerable human images and the calculated coldness of the weapons provokes one to think about the power of the gun and the effects of violence on the most vulnerable in our communities.
Concluding Remarks: Where To From Here?

The Edmonton conference on “Children and War: Impact” brought the first phase of the research project on Children and Armed Conflict to a successful conclusion. The project team is now focusing its sights on disseminating the results of the year of research and of the conference studies. A book will be published by the University of Alberta (possibly in conjunction with the United Nations University Press in Tokyo). This book will contain selected presentations from the conference and will be peer-reviewed. New and strong networks have evolved from the conference and this in itself should help place the plight of war-affected children more firmly on local, regional, and international agendas. We encourage you to keep in contact with us and to visit the project website regularly to keep up to date on our progress.

http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/childrenandwar

We are hoping to establish a knowledge sharing network via the website that would allow people interested in this research to interact with one another and to push the work being done in this area forward.

Second Phase: Protection

The second phase of the research project will be launched over the summer months of 2004. Its focus will be on assessing the legal protection mechanisms in place for children affected by war. This phase of the project will culminate with a conference being planned for the summer of 2005 and to be held in California. The University of Alberta project will benefit from the assistance and expertise of Charlotte Ku, the Executive Director of the American Society of International Law (ASIL), and Edwin Smith, the Leon Benwell Professor of Law and International Relations at the University of Southern California Law School. This phase of the project will be critical of the international legal ‘rights’ approach aimed at protecting children in conflict and post conflict situations and of the ethnocentric and Western-centric attempts to impose external protection norms on conflict-ridden societies.

The experience of the past few decades (e.g. the genocide in Rwanda, the clan violence in Somalia, the internecine killing and maiming in Sierra Leone, Liberia, the DRC, and Uganda, the fractional fighting in Mozambique, the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, the intifadah in Palestine, and the suicide attacks in Israel) indicates that, despite the existence of significant international human rights standards and humanitarian laws, the international community has had limited success in protecting children from the ravages of armed conflict.

Olara Otunnu, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, has identified this problem as a major one. He notes that the most pressing challenge for the UN is to translate the principles, standards and measures, that have been put in place by such legal instruments as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Optional Protocol to the Child Rights Convention, into facts on the ground. [See UNSC Press release SC/7631 Meeting 4684, 14 January 2003]

The main problem with international human rights law is that it was devised to regulate state behavior yet governments have been able to continue human rights abuses with impunity. Even if states decide to adhere to international legal child protection standards and norms (and many of them do not), rebel groups will tend to disregard these rules even more so. In addition the sovereignty and non-intervention norms are still so powerful among many states that intervention, even to protect innocent children, is viewed by many as an affront to the independence of the state.

Yet, there is a burgeoning literature supporting the position of solidarists and international society theorists who claim that the international community has the ‘responsibility to protect’ victims of civil conflict, particularly if the state government in the theatre of conflict is unwilling or unable to do so.

This is a powerful argument, as the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy pointed out in his keynote address to the Edmonton conference, for the use of international legal instruments – such as conventions, treaties, protocols, UN Security Council resolutions, and sanctions – in the protection of children caught in the midst of conflict. While the need to protect children is urgent, this research project will expose the problems inherent in solutions that do not take sufficiently into account indigenous child protection norms.

Basic Research Questions in Phase Two

Clearly, in the context of a changed security environment in which intra-state and internecine conflict is prevalent, there is a need to rethink the ‘legal’ child protection strategies that the international community has used in the past and consider a stratagem that is rooted in local norms and values. Some of the relevant questions to be addressed in this phase are:

• What norms and cultural values sustain the “culture of violence” in the societies where children are affected by war?
• What local norms and cultural traits give rise to the absence of protection for children in conflict and post-conflict countries?

• What norms and values (at the international, regional and local levels) can lead to the enhancement of protection of children during armed conflicts?

• Which local standards of protection work and which do not?

• Is there a clash between international and local legal measures aimed at protection of children in conflict zones?

There is clearly a shift here in the focus from universalist approaches to child protection to more culturally-specific and local approaches.

The second phase of this research project will therefore raise the issue of whether or not universal legal standards, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are ethnocentric or trans-cultural. In addition, this phase will investigate the possibility of developing – in theatres of conflict – ‘codes of conduct’, ‘zones of peace’, and ‘periods of tranquility’ to which belligerents would adhere. It draws on recently constructivist work that offers some explanation of the process of making emerging norms more robust.

Certainly, there is a need to supplement the international legal norms geared at protecting children in conflict and post conflict situations with local norms of child protection. However, ways must be found to strengthen those local norms to the point where all warring parties, without question, can accept them; and this will be one of the goals of the second phase of this project.

The Third Phase: Rehabilitation

The third phase of the proposed research will focus on post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. One of the most important aspects of post-war development is psychological rehabilitation of those children who have killed or witnessed horrendous acts of violence.

There is a significant gap in knowledge about the various types, and the effectiveness, of interventions made on behalf of children affected by armed conflict. Most of the studies of psychological rehabilitation in war torn societies have focused on Western models. The ethnocentric (and Western-centric) nature of these interventions has come under severe criticism of late.

This phase of the research provides an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of a specific program of healing, reconciliation, rehabilitation and social reintegration of child ex-combatants in Sierra Leone. The program is carried out by a Freetown-based NGO - Children Associated with the War (CAW).

It will, however, not overlook the efforts to rehabilitate children who have been physically maimed during armed violence. Neither will it neglect other attempts at reintegrating war-affected children back into communities.

The CAW program is a community/family-based effort, sponsored in large part by the Catholic Church in Freetown, that emphasizes culturally appropriate methods, such as traditional cleansing/purification ceremonies, to deal with psychosocial stress and trauma. CAW has registered over 2,500 child ex-combatants in its programme (out of the 6,000 to 10,000 children between the ages of 7 and 18 believed to have taken part in the recent civil war there), and has been at the forefront of tracing methods to reunite children with their families. Nevertheless, little is known of its modus operandi and no formal evaluation has been done of its rehabilitation and reintegration methods. Assessment of the CAW program will also include an evaluation of the ways in which it has dealt with children who have been sexually abused, have had their education interrupted, were maimed as a result of landmines, or infected by HIV/AIDS.

If you are interested in contributing to any portion of this research project, please contact the project team at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta. You can send an e-mail to:
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(Telus Centre for Professional Development) and Yvan
Mireault (Classroom Support Services)

A warm-hearted thanks to all the volunteers who assisted with making the conference an enormous success. We couldn't have done it without you!

Kunal Anand
Toks Bakinson
Chris Bjornestad
Kirin Choudhry
Joseph Ekemu
Bola Fakuade
Marie Gervais
Phil Goebel
Ian Harding
Kendra Jeperson
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Sandra Rein
Laura Roberts
Louise Rollingher
Laura Samaroo
Lynn Schlecker
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