



Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research

Children Facing Insecurity: New Strategies for Survival in a Global Era

Policy paper produced for
the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

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Executive Summary

This paper explores the nature of children's security within the context of modern threats from globalization and new forms of warfare. It analyzes the sources of insecurity faced by children and the survival strategies they and their families employ as a result. Through a number of case-studies, it questions the usefulness of assistance programs that focus on the physical needs of children in isolation of their social and communal environment. As children are in a constant state of development, protecting their security requires more than support against physical harm. The paper argues that four dimensions of security are important for the protection of children in times of war: physiological necessities, safety, communal relationships and opportunities for personal development. Efforts to promote children's security must involve analysis of these core dimensions and treat the coping strategies of children and their families as a roadmap for protection.

The focus of this paper is children affected by war but the analysis also applies to children at risk in other circumstances, from street children, to those living in extreme poverty. Children's security is particularly at risk in those countries under economic embargo, afflicted by armed conflict or by extreme poverty. Today's threats take place in the context of wars sustained by the import of small arms and light weapons and are often fought over the control of valuable resources – oil, minerals, timber, gems - whose major markets are in the North. The dislocation caused by these wars fragments families and isolates children.

While few of these threats are new, their impact on the life and security of children has increased with the globalization of trade, migration and communication. Civilians, especially children and their families, have been forced to develop new coping mechanisms for their changed situations. Children can no longer be viewed merely as the victims of war. They have taken on new roles as heads of households, child combatants, student leaders and actors in peace building.

This paper explores how globalization affects the security of children, particularly in conflict areas. It presents a framework to structure the core dimensions of children's security and discusses how the survival strategies employed by families and children when protections fail may be used as a signal for improving security conditions for children.

The paper was produced for the Human Security Network meeting in Amman, 11-12 May 2001, with a contribution from the Canadian Department for Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

I - Human Security and Children

Human security has gained increasing attention as a framework for understanding the broader factors that contribute to peace and security. Traditionally, the goal of security was the protection of state borders from

external threats. This approach assumed that if the state was secure, the security of the population would automatically be assured.

The traditional approach has faced increasing criticism at a time when over 90% of wars take place within, rather than between states. Some states have not only failed to provide a minimum level of security for their people, but have become significant sources of human insecurity. In his Report to the Millennium Assembly, United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan wrote:

“International conventions have traditionally looked at states to protect civilians, but today this expectation is threatened in several ways. First, states are sometimes the principal perpetrator of violence against the very citizens that humanitarian law requires them to protect. Second, non-state combatants, particularly in collapsed states, are often ignorant or contemptuous of humanitarian law. Third, international conventions do not adequately address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced persons, or women and children in complex emergencies.” (p. 46, 2000)

The human security perspective is very different. In this new framework, individuals, not states, are the focus of security strategies. Human security seeks to protect the physical safety and integrity of individuals and communities, rather than to defend state borders from external threats. Human security strategies are proactive; they stress conflict prevention and peace-building rather than humanitarian response. Human security is thus both a measure and a determinant of state and global security.

The plight of children in unstable areas is central to the human security agenda. Confronted by a range of threats, children at risk are refashioning the definition of childhood itself as they are pushed in to new roles. As the result of war, extreme poverty and natural disaster, many children have become heads of household, child combatants or have made a life for themselves on the street.

Since children are in an ongoing process of development, securing their safety involves protecting their growth. This means that for children, human security strategies must not only protect the young from violence but also create the conditions for children to develop and reach their potential. The most basic of these conditions is freedom from the threat of violence.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is central to any discussion of children’s security. The failure of some states to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of children contributes to their insecurity. The CRC lays out the inherent rights and conditions necessary for the human dignity and human security of children. Within the framework of the CRC, children’s security is concerned with the minimum conditions required for the survival, physical safety and development of children at risk in humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, natural disasters and comprehensive social and economic breakdowns. Any discussion of children’s security therefore requires particular attention to several key CRC Articles. These include the child’s right to life and maximum survival and development (Art. 6), protection from all forms of violence (Art. 19) and exploitation (Arts. 34-36), the right to an adequate standard of living (Art. 27) and rights to health and education (Arts. 24 & 28). The CRC also underscores a child’s right to a name, a family and national identity as well as protection from unjust separation from one’s family including provisions for reunification (Arts. 7-10). The CRC also makes specific reference to the protection of children who are refugees (Art. 22) or otherwise affected by armed conflict (Art. 38) and their rights to physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (Art. 39).

Realizing the rights of children is about much more than ensuring their basic security needs. However, using the CRC as a guide, a human security approach to children provides an important starting point for understanding the core threats to the life, survival and development of children.

Like the rights of the child, the key elements of children’s security in war-torn or unstable environments are

interrelated and must be viewed holistically. For example, children afflicted by sexual violence in armed conflicts may become vulnerable to both disease and mental health problems. Such an outcome may in turn undermine their chances reaching their maximum developmental potential even once a conflict subsides. Assisting children in coping with the scars of war can only be planned on the long term, beyond the traditional realm of humanitarian operations. Such programs must also integrate the participation of community members into all aspects of their implementation because local social environments provide the context for the rehabilitation of these children, be they demobilized combatants, sexually abused children or orphans.

The changing nature of threats against children, including political violence, labor practices and increasing sexual violence has brought a new sense of urgency to the human security debate. When these threats converge in a crisis, the impact on the lives of children can be dramatic. Armed conflict, in particular, presents new challenges to the protection of children's security.

Wars kill more children than ever before. According to UNICEF, (1996) children in war zones are often as likely as adults to become the victims of rape, torture and killing. This trend stems, at least in part, from a breakdown in respect for humanitarian law. The majority of contemporary conflicts are civil wars where at least one of the warring parties is a non-state actor. Non-state armed forces are much less likely than state armies to know about, or hold themselves to, humanitarian law. More significantly, civilians have become strategic targets in many of today's wars. Children are often the victims of this decline in the respect for humanitarian law. Since they are less able to protect themselves and without adequate legal protections, children have become increasingly vulnerable to a variety of predatory and abusive practices.

In situations of instability and violence, children face direct threats to their safety. They also confront the possibility of loss, separation from family, friends and their extended social network, lack of access to critical health and social services and obstacles to educational and vocational training.

Defining Children in a Human Security Perspective

Children, or childhood cannot be crudely defined. Children cannot be characterized simply as members of a "vulnerable" group, but must be considered as individuals with needs, rights and the agency to act and make decisions in accordance with their evolving capacities. The definition of a child, or the nature of childhood, is strongly nuanced by cultural norms and expectations concerning the social position, rights and responsibilities of children. In particular, the experiences of different groups of children differ dramatically according to race/ethnicity, age and social class. They also vary significantly by gender. Girls and boys are differentially affected by threats to their basic safety and survival – and react to them differently.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as "as every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is obtained earlier" (CRC, 1989). The idea of the evolving capacities of children is inherent to the CRC. The capacities of individual children to act on their own behalf, and to participate in decisions that affect them, are in a constant state of development.

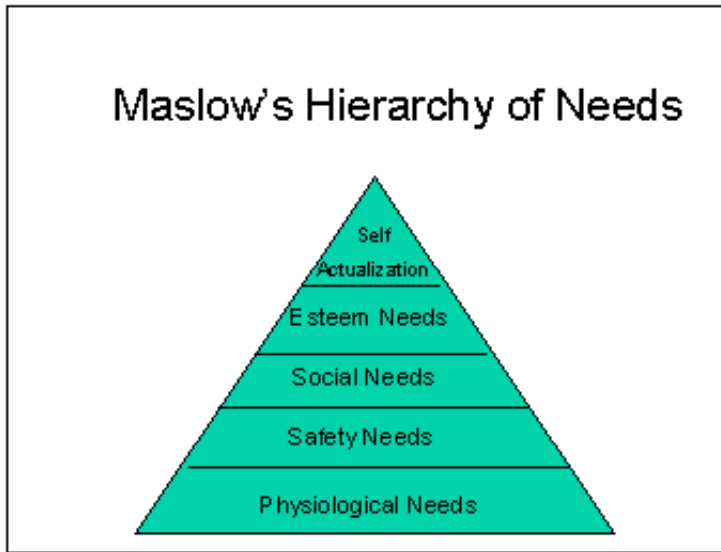
The importance of considering children's views, and their right to participate in decisions that affect them, is a core theme of the CRC articulated in Articles 12-15. To understand children's security, consideration must be given to their experiences and views concerning safety, security, and development, considering both their evolving capacities and the best interests of the child. Human security policies must take into account children's views as well as their roles as actors and decision makers in processes that contribute to security or insecurity.

II - Core Dimensions of Children's Security

What exactly are children's security needs? How can we develop strategies to address children's insecurity? It is vital in this context to consider the key elements of the basic security requirements of children. A useful model can be developed from the CRC and Maslow's (1954) early writings on basic human needs.

Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' model is often invoked in debates concerning interventions on behalf of refugees and other populations in difficult circumstances. Maslow argued that there is a hierarchy of human needs – the most important and basic are survival needs – food, water and shelter. Basic safety needs follow – sufficient security to permit the satisfaction of the 'higher order' needs of love, belonging and – ultimately esteem and self-actualization.

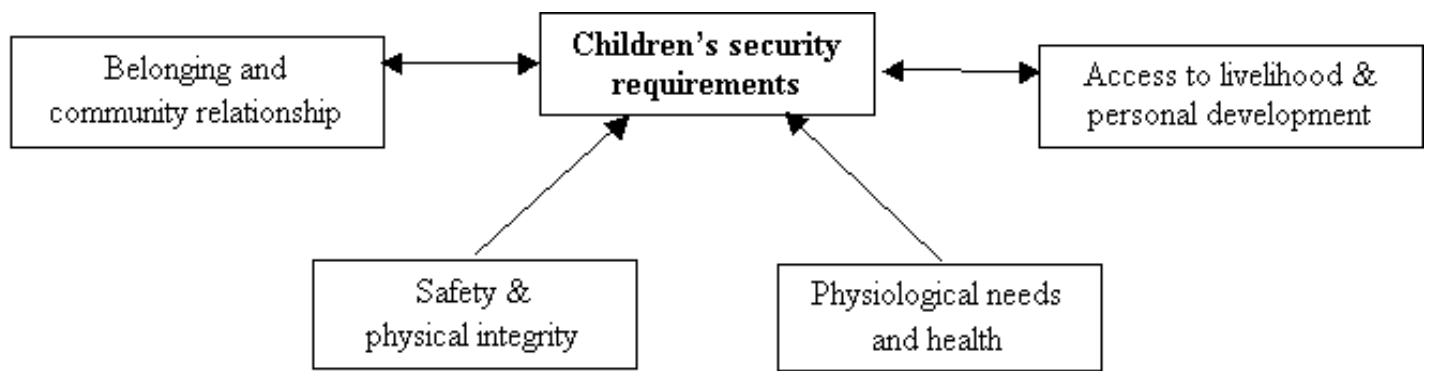
Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Maslow's hierarchy places basic physiological needs for food, water and shelter at its base as these are essential for survival. Second are those safety needs which provide the security necessary for higher forms of development. Above safety needs, Maslow placed emotional needs such as those for love and belonging. The highest points represent the need for esteem and self-actualization.

A similar model can be used to categorize the security needs of children. However, special attention must be paid to both the linkages between the different dimensions of needs, so important in child development, and their relationship to the community responding to these needs. The context of children's security much be examined in terms of the ability or obstacles faced by states, communities, and families to address these core security dimensions. This model is presented as tool for analysis rather than an end in and of itself. It is intended to provide a framework for organizing many manifestations security threats facing children and their coping responses. Like Maslow's model, we recognize the importance of health and fundamental physical conditions (food, water, and shelter) and basic needs for personal safety and integrity. Although these two basic conditions are necessary, they are not sufficient for establishing the security of children. Perhaps more than any other life phase, childhood is a period characterized by dependence on others for survival and emotional nurturance. In this manner, relationship and connection to others is a necessary component of child survival and healthy development. Likewise, as children grow into adolescence, their need to connect to a sense of a future, either through educational or vocational opportunity becomes a necessary component of their development and well-being.

Interdependence of children's security needs



The graph shown above represents the interdependence of the security needs of children. Children's survival depends on physiological necessities, safety, communal relationships and opportunities for personal development. While safety and physiological needs are addressed by food, health care and physical protection, children's personal development needs are intimately linked to their social environment – their families and communities. The survival of communities in turn relies on security of the younger generation. In essence, children's security is just as concerned with maintaining social relationships as providing for physiological and physical security needs.

The dimensions of children's security are highly interdependent. When a child's health needs are not met, their ability to attend school is compromised and their potential for personal development and vocational success undermined. Similarly if children are denied physical security in their communities, they may seek to protect themselves by joining gangs or armed groups as child combatants. Banding together for protection can foster a sense of identity and community for young people, even when shaped by ethnic division and hatred. Armed solidarity may also be a strategy to help children secure their basic needs for food, shelter and a livelihood. With modern light weapons, children are as capable as adults of using deadly force. For these reasons, neglecting the security needs of children can have serious security consequences for the society as a whole. The following sections explore each of the core dimensions of children's security. In each of the four sections, the examples of threats facing children are identified and strategies to promote their security, using their coping strategies as a guide, are presented and analyzed.

Safety & physical integrity

Reducing the threat of violence to individuals is at the core of any human security strategy. The nature of modern violence affecting children is shaped by the international trade in small arms and antipersonnel land mines. The flow of small arms and light weapons –which kill the largest number of people in most wars today – is sustained by local demand and international supply. The increasing openness of global markets, permeability of borders, and pervasive corruption make the illicit transfer of these weapons difficult to control. Global demand also sustains competition for control over natural resources such as minerals, gems, oil and forest products – extractive industries that are frequently associated with violent conflicts.

Children may be exposed to violence either directly or indirectly. Direct exposure involves injury from firearms or other weapons or suffering physical or sexual abuse. In many cases, the degree of a child's exposure to violence may vary according to socioeconomic status, gender, age and race/ethnicity. For example, boys tend to be the primary victims of physical violence, whereas girls are more exposed to sexual violence. Violence is a leading cause of injury and death in young people around the world. A report on Health in the Americas (Pan American Health Organization, 1998) indicates that 28.7% of all homicide deaths in the Americas were among adolescents between 10 and 19 years of age. In Colombia, the homicide rate increased from 101 per 100,000 to 267 per 100,000 between 1985 and 1994 (ibid.). In 1990, the Pan American Health Organization (1990) listed homicide as the leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds. In

the United States, a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that among young people aged 15-24, homicide is the second leading cause of death in the population, and the leading cause of death for young African Americans (CDC, 1999). In addition, analysts estimate that the ratio of non-fatal to fatal assaults may be as high as 100 to 1 (Rosenberg & Mercy, 1985). Though startling, these figures only reflect the extreme forms of community violence (Richters and Martinez, 1993a).

These statistics are usually unavailable for less developed countries and conflict zones where threats may be even more significant. However, they reveal the extent to which children's security is under threat in countries not usually considered as dangerous. Most research has focused on direct exposure to violence, while less attention has been devoted to the consequences of witnessing chronic violence in one's community. Witnessing violence is associated with a range of emotional and behavioral consequences ranging from anxiety and depression to increased tendency of delinquency (Buka et. al, in press). Work must be done to understand the psychological effects on children who grow up in an environment of sustained violence. With the increased prevalence of violence in some regions, the dominant approach to childhood trauma addressing the needs of children exposed to single, emotionally charged events comes into question. In some conflict regions, entire generations of children have grown up knowing nothing but war and disruption. Confronting constant insecurity and fear, they do not all remain passive victims. As their capacities evolve, children facing insecurity fashion their own coping strategies, in some cases engaging directly in the conduct of the hostilities.

These types of engagement may also help children rediscover a sense of control in a chaotic and unpredictable situation. Some child development research indicates that strong identification with a political ideology may protect children who have been exposed to political violence and is associated with reduced emotional and behavioral problems in young people (Punamaki, 1996). Children may also seek to protect themselves by joining resistance groups, sometimes taking up arms. Some have reported that joining armed forces is a means of protecting themselves against threats to their own security (Goodwin-Gil & Cohn, 1996). In this manner, some aspects of the phenomenon of child combatants can be seen as a coping strategy for threatened children. Yet this survival strategy may place children in the path of further danger and feed cycles of instability and violence, increasing the overall insecurity of the community.

Case Study: Youth Participation in Middle Eastern Instability

Chronic stress and violence mean that children in conflict often develop psychological, behavioral and cognitive coping mechanisms. Palestinian youth in refugee camps, particularly in the Gaza Strip and West Bank provide an interesting example of this dynamic. Many of the coping strategies can be considered as healthy responses to an unhealthy environment such as military occupation and political violence. However, "pathological" adaptations by children trying to survive have also been observed among children exposed to chronic violence in both urban US environments and the Middle East (Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991). Exposure to sustained violence, combined with foreshortened hopes for the future, can make children desensitized to the dangers and consequences of violence (Garbarino et. al. 1992). As a result, some children may take further risks in an effort to establish a sense of control.

Furthermore, how a war is perceived in the community may moderate the impact of violence on children. The concept of "sumud", the determination to persist despite hardships, has proved a source of strength for Palestinians surviving under occupation or as refugees (Garbarino and colleagues 1991). Ideology can present a source of psychological resilience amid the stresses of war as the population is given a sense of purpose and identity. Research on Israeli children demonstrates that strong ideological commitments can protect against anxiety, depression and feelings of failure in children exposed to political hardship (Punamaki, 1996). Compared to children with strong ideological identification, children with weak ideological commitments tended to have more psychosocial problems after exposure to political hardships.

However, strongly-held ideologies may be a double-edged sword. Although they can provide a degree of psychological security for children and families, they can also exacerbate inter-communal tensions, making conflict resolution more difficult. These ideologies may also push young people to the front lines of conflict. A recent Boston Globe article reported that 50 of the 204 Palestinian civilians killed in late 2000 were under the age of 17 with some as young as 12 (Sennott, 2000).

Basic Physiological Needs

- Health

Health and physiologic needs are central to the security of children. The CRC details the child's right to survival, life and development (Art. 6), health (Art. 24) and standard of living with particular attention to nutrition and housing (Art. 27). In many parts of the world these rights are continually threatened as the result of conflict and political instability. Insecurity and violence undermine basic health and services infrastructures that would in normal circumstances assist the provision of food, water and shelter for children and their families. The susceptibility of young children to disease makes them particularly vulnerable to the collapse of health care services, food scarcity and population displacement in times of conflict.

Among refugee and displaced persons, the majority of deaths are caused by disease, rather than the direct consequences of violence. Of the ten nations with the highest death rates for children under the age of five, seven are affected by armed conflict (United Nations, 1996). The provision of basic physiological needs and access to health care is a critical dimension of children's security.

In focus: The impact of HIV/AIDS on children

Conflict and the associated forced migration, have accelerated the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus. HIV/AIDS has both direct and indirect effects on the security of children. UN AIDS currently estimates that the majority of all new HIV infections occur in children and young people under 25 years of age (UN AIDS, 2000). Children are also affected by the virus through the death of their parents and other caregivers, creating an estimated 13.2 million orphaned children. Children orphaned by AIDS are more likely than other orphans to be at risk from malnutrition, disease, abuse and sexual exploitation (Report of the UN Secretary-General 2001). HIV/AIDS has a particular impact on girls who are left to care for ailing parents, or who have to become the heads of households upon the death of caregivers. The risk of sexual exploitation is particularly significant for those left alone to cope with poverty who are forced to adopt adult roles. In addition, children orphaned by AIDS often face stigmatization and discrimination within their communities. The survival strategies employed by children and families to deal with the disease pandemic illustrate the links between the fundamental threats to the security of children.

- Hunger and Malnutrition

Hunger and malnutrition are intrinsically linked to children's security. Nutritional deficiencies significantly compromise a child's ability to fight off disease. Childhood hunger and malnutrition are fundamental threats to the security of children as they undermine the conditions necessary for children to survive and attain maximum development. UNICEF's 1998 State of the World's Children report termed hunger a "silent emergency" citing evidence from WHO that child malnutrition was implicated in over half of deaths

to children in developing countries in 1995 (UNICEF, 1998). Although over the last three decades the rate of severe malnutrition has fallen globally, some areas of the world, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, has felt an increase in chronic food insecurity (Costello & White, 2001). This region is also the zone most prone to violent conflict.

In some regions, conflict exacerbates failures to secure the basic nutritional and health needs of civilians, with children being particularly affected. For example, the protracted 12-year civil conflict in El Salvador aggravated chronic problems of hunger in the region (Brentlinger et. al, 1999). The 1992 peace settlement attempted to redress pre-war economic injustices, but failed to address children's insecurity particularly with attention to health and nutritional needs. Long after the conflict had subsided, child malnutrition persisted at extremely high rates.

Research (ibid.) revealed that the rate of child malnutrition was directly related to a delay in the implementation of reconstruction programs and failure to provide basic health and social services. The problem of persistent malnutrition was "strongly associated with delay in full cultivation of redistributed land and in provision of water". By failing to address these issues, El Salvador continues to face the same disparities in opportunity that underpinned years of conflict.

In focus: The impact of sanctions on children

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been paid to the impact of sanctions on the health and survival of children and families. Public health monitoring of the impact of sanctions has routinely indicated that the vulnerable, particularly children, are the most severely affected (Gibbons & Garfield, 1994). A study of the impact of sanctions in Haiti from 1991-1994 indicates that sanctions were associated with falling incomes, rising unemployment, worsening nutritional indicators, and increases in mortality among children age 1-4 years, decreased attention to children's well-being and education, and the breakdown of family relationships. In the case of Iraq there was a sustained increase of child mortality as a direct consequence of UN sanctions (Garfield 2000). Researchers note the multiple "survival strategies" employed by families facing the pressures of sanctions. Survey information indicates that families sold off family items and moved into crowded accommodation. Women, in particular those with young children, were more likely to remain with violent and abusive partners. Affected families made dietary choices resulting in poorer nutrition. Mothers had less time for food preparation and breast-feeding. Many mothers sought work in more distant areas, placing added pressures on child care and monitoring. Many families engaged in illegal activities to make ends meet, including the "sale of oneself or one's daughter" into prostitution (ibid).

Belonging and community relationship

For children, relationships with caregivers are needed for survival and growth, as children move from a state of total dependence and develop the ability to care for themselves. The need for relationship, attachment to others, and a sense of belonging form the third core dimension of children's security. These relationships sustain life in early childhood and provide the foundations for social, emotional and moral development.

Children in insecure environments often develop create their own adaptive "family" networks to provide

connection to others, secure their protection, share resources and manage risk – the case study below on child-headed households in Rwanda illustrates these points. The failure of international aid organizations to recognize child-headed households in needs assessments and the distribution of aid may undermine the efforts of these young people to secure their own survival.

Children and adolescents need to develop within the framework of supportive relationships. This awareness has led many to criticize the institutionalisation of children in custodial settings such as orphanages. Yet in many countries where disease or conflict has created large numbers of orphans, the government is unable to respond in any other way. In Sri Lanka, orphanages are multiplying and can barely keep pace with the number of orphans arriving at their doors which “doubles every two months” (Bush, 2000).

In the absence of alternatives, the nature of institutionalised care characterized by the degree to which a child receives warm and loving care, has a significant impact on their development and security. Research on orphans in Eritrea indicates that institutions where the entire staff is involved in decision-making affecting the children, and where children’s self-reliance is encouraged through close interactions with staff, were much more effective in promoting the emotional well-being of children. Children in structured institutions where relationships with the staff are impersonal were more likely to suffer emotional distress (Wolff & Fesseha, 1998). Whenever no alternatives exist to institutionalising children, attention must be paid to the nature of the care to ensure that it is designed to promote children’s security and well-being. Likewise, placing children in foster care alone cannot be seen as a simple solution. Attention much be paid to the nature of the caregiving relationship and its ability to be sustained.

- Mental Health and Connectedness

Research from Western sources indicates that support to children from their peers or family plays a protective role in a young person’s behavioral and emotional health (Resnick et. al., 1996). Communities that are cohesive and where people take on active roles to redirect the negative behavior have been shown to have reduced incidence of overall violence regardless of racial/ethnic composition or socioeconomic status (Sampson et. al., 1997).

Early research on children’s reactions to war underlined the importance of support from a loved one in moderating their responses to difficult circumstances. Anna Freud and Burlingham (1943) observed “If these bombing incidents occur when small children are in the care of their own mother or familial mother substitutes, they do not seem to be particularly affected by them” (p.37). Another early study of children during the British evacuations of World War II (Henshaw & Howarth, 1941) concluded that, for children, evacuation itself caused more emotional strain than the air raids. The psychological effects of violence on children may be more dependent on the level of social supports available to children than the abject degree of violence that they witness.

The importance of social supports must be reflected in efforts to protect children’s security. Strategies to foster social supports and “supportive” environments for young people are needed to help shield war-affected children from emotional and behavioral risks. A study of Cambodian refugee children living in the United States (Kinzie, et. al., 1986) found that placement with a nuclear family member had a significant protective affect against adverse mental health outcomes. They observed that refugee children who were placed with a previously unknown Cambodian or American foster family were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder. In fact, the researchers found no significant relationship with the level of horrors the adolescents had experienced during their concentration camp experience under the Pol Pot regime and later psychiatric diagnosis. What seemed to matter most was the context of support available to the children following the event; in this case, placement with a familiar family member.

Boys and girls may have different needs for social support. Studies of Kuwaiti children during the Gulf War

found that social support moderated the effects of trauma for girls, but not in boys. (Llabre & Hadi, 1997) Overall, girls also reported higher levels of social support than boys. Further studies of these differences may help the development of strategies to address the needs of children exposed to the traumas of war.

Case Study: Child-Headed Households following the Rwandan Genocide

As a result of the genocide, an estimated 60,000 child-headed households (CHH) are thought to exist in Rwanda today (BBC, 2001). Many of the children in these re-created “families” lost their parents in the conflict and are today struggling for survival. Rwandan communities have been transformed in the wake of the genocide. Family structures that used to support children have been destroyed and community priorities and values have changed. Children have moved from their central place in the community, as families struggle for their basic survival. Changes in the community structure and functioning have reshaped the roles taken on by youth, leaving CHH’s to manage their own survival often with little help or acknowledgement from their communities. Typically, these households consist of a teenage child raising several younger children both related and unrelated to them. According to World Vision (1998), 3 out of 4 of these households are headed by females who face high risks of abuse and exploitation. CHH Recent reports from the BBC capture, in the words of children themselves, how they have come to “cope” with their situation.

An interview with “Habasa” a 17-year-old girl is particularly revealing. At the outset of the interview, she tells the BBC reporter “I cannot go to school today because the baby is ill with malaria and diarrhea”. She explains that this happens each time the baby is unwell, but she is troubled by missing school and struggles with her new role: “I want to go to school. It’s not easy looking after the baby as well as my young brothers and sisters”. When asked how they manage, Habasa indicates that others provide intermittent help: “We get some help from the neighbours and the government, but it’s not enough. Sometimes its available, sometimes its not”. As the oldest member of her family, her biggest worry is “Looking after the children. You know I am still very young and cannot manage. But I have no alternative, I have got to do what I am supposed to do”. For Habasa, the family that she and her siblings have created forms their way to manage the loss of their parents. When the interviewer asks if she remembers what life was like before losing their parents, she says “It’s enough to drive you mad but then what do you do except pray to God. You learn to cope.” (BBC, 2001)

The hardships facing child-headed households are pervasive. World Vision reports:

“The CHHs are deprived of love, security, sense of belonging, acceptance and care. They have no one to turn to and live in very difficult circumstances, without basic necessities for life. This forces them to engage in a variety of casual jobs to earn a living. They are usually exploited or taken advantage of, hence the loss of trust of the society that is supposed to protect them. This compels the to grow up overnight to face adult responsibilities and the harsh realities of life: caring for younger siblings with hardly enough to survive on. Most property left behind by their parents has been taken away by relatives or neighbors.” (1998)

Often, there are formidable tensions between CHHs and their communities. Many families in the community are as impoverished as the CHH and “feel that these neighbours are an extra burden for them, on top of the numerous problems in their own families” (World Vision, 1998, p. 4).

A series of interviews with children and the community in Rwanda revealed five priority needs: shelter, food, reliable sources of income, education and health (World Vision, 1998). These priority areas reflect the four dimensions of children’s security discussed in this paper. The interviews also revealed the link between hope for the future and psychological trauma. An interview with 13 year old Nyirahabimana Epiphanie described such a response “Maybe these children I am looking after might become intelligent in

school, but I don't think of myself becoming anything. In fact, I don't like to think about the future" (World Vision, 1998, p. 18).

The coping methods of youth were also discussed: " the children in CHH demonstrate a large degree of latent ability and in many cases they show initiative in their efforts to survive. This is an ability that can be trained and harnessed, and initiative that will bring benefit to communities who choose to develop it" (World Vision, 1998, p. 4).

Access to livelihood & personal development

The fourth dimension of children's security concerns their future and the opportunities available to them to reach their maximum potential. This last dimension forms a critical link between children's security and their relationship with their social environment.

- Education

In today's global economy, even in the poorest countries, education is essential for the future advancement of children. Education is the primary means of securing the skills and qualifications necessary to achieve gainful employment, to compete and to succeed.

Education also plays other important roles in children's survival and well-being. Timely access to educational opportunities is extremely important for children displaced due to armed conflict. The early provision of education can restore predictability and social support to lives disrupted by war (Alguilar & Retamal, 1998; UNICEF 1999; UNHCR 1997). For displaced children, education programs also serve as a form of protection since schools are safe places where their physical and mental well-being can be monitored. Participatory educational programs can help develop social networks and supports between children and staff and among children themselves. The International Rescue Committee runs emergency education programs that prioritise the involvement of displaced youth with teachers, parents and community members. Such participatory approaches may help foster a "focus" on children within the displaced community and a sense of program ownership among young people and community members.

Education and opportunities to develop vocational skills help children retain their sense of hope for the future. Low levels of literacy among displaced youth, especially those whose schooling has been disrupted during years of protracted conflict, pose serious threats to their future well-being. Failing to improve the life chances of children increases the risk that they will seek violent solutions to the problems they will later confront. Strategies to promote children's security should pay attention to the relationship between disrupted education, low literacy and mental health.

Case Study: Literacy of Chechen Youth Displaced in Ingushetia

Chechen families and their children had not yet recovered from the impacts of the 1995-1996 civil war when they were again uprooted from their homes in late August 1999. Since September 1999, the bordering Republic of Ingushetia has absorbed nearly 200,000 internally-displaced persons (IDPs) from Chechnya. Recent estimates indicate that over 45% of the displaced are below 18 years of age (OCHA, December 1999). Contacts with families revealed that educational prospects for young displaced people were of great concern to parents, community members and young people themselves (IRC, 2000). Because Chechen children are not currently accepted into the Ingush school system, emergency education programs have been created for them during the protracted displacement.

In January of 2000, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) launched non-formal education and recreation activities to respond to the expressed needs of internally displaced young Chechens in Ingushetia. The IRC has a unique rights-based model for emergency education. The IRC model emphasizes

youth and community participation in the planning and implementation of the program. An initial evaluation focusing on adolescents indicated that a majority of the displaced Chechens had very low levels of basic literacy. IRC staff surmised that these rates of low literacy were associated with the disruption of educational opportunity in Chechnya since the 1994-1996 war. A survey of teenagers confirmed that the majority of adolescents had been previously displaced. These findings led the IRC to adapt its programming to address low literacy as a major threat to the security and future development of this generation of youth. Without the skills needed to compete in the new economy, an entire generation of Chechen youth could be left unable to succeed. Denied access to the legal economy, some may be tempted to turn to violence or crime to secure their livelihood. Such coping strategies might undermine future peace building and reconciliation efforts as well as development.

Such sentiments are captured in the words of an 18 year old woman living in one of Ingushetia's many spontaneous settlements:

“Children are probably the future, I think so. And consequently, if this future is better educated, it will also be better to live in Grozny... the people will live better...if the children are uneducated, undisciplined, there will be no future in Grozny” (Stichick, 2001).

The IRC's findings also have implications for the mental health of these war-affected youth since children's overall psychosocial functioning may be undermined by limitations like low literacy. A clear understanding of the relationship between literacy, mental health and adaptation will be invaluable for clarifying the potential vulnerabilities faced by this generation of young people.

- Labor

Many of the world's children work to help support themselves and their families. A recent survey suggests that over 73 million children, 13% of those aged 10-14, are “employed” (State of the World's Children, 1997). The 1997 State of the World's Children Report argues that child labor has both costs and benefits. For children, work can be “beneficial, enhancing a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development without interfering with schooling, recreation or rest” (p. 24). Yet child labor can also be exploitative and threaten children's survival and development rights as enshrined in Article 6 of the CRC. The Convention condemns practices such as bonded child labor and child prostitution as fundamental threats to the life, survival and development and the best interests of children. The recent passage of the ILO Convention on Child Labor marks significant progress in efforts to end the most dangerous forms of child labor.

Many of the world's working children face dangerous conditions and grave occupational hazards. Globalisation feeds the increasing demand for child labor and political instability makes labor norms more difficult to enforce. Child labor has increased dramatically in response to economic restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe and the growth of service industries in the US and UK (UNICEF, 1997). In many African countries, families increasingly rely on their children's labor because of political instability, lack of adult employment, and the scourge of HIV/AIDS (ibid.).

Children work in an attempt to cope with economic pressures, but child labor must be assessed in terms of impacts on the rights and security of children. When labor threatens the physical and mental health of children, disrupts their education or the development of vocational skills, it threatens their immediate security and also the future security of their community.

- Children's participation in improving their security

Children must be involved in decisions and strategies to protect their security. The fundamental right of

children to be consulted, and to participate in decisions that affect their lives (considering the best interests of the child along with their evolving capacities), are central tenets in the CRC expressed in Articles 12-15. Strategists must recognize that young people are constantly taking action on their own behalf regardless of whether or not it is formally recognized as “participation”. The survival strategies of children and their families in the face of adversity reveal the extent of their capacity to act when other protections fail. These coping strategies must be understood in any efforts implement policies to address children’s security.

Children’s participation in decision-making ranges from tokenism to meaningful guided participation and sharing decisions with adults. (Hart, 1992). Involving young people in processes that affect them requires long-term sustained commitment. As learned in the participation of youth in the International Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada, flexibility, a sustained time commitment, and overcoming scepticism of adults are all necessary for meaningful participation of young people (Cockburn, 2001).

Since some of today’s violence-affected children are tomorrow’s leaders and decision makers, the case for involving them in peace processes and post-conflict initiatives is compelling. Interesting examples of involving children in initiatives to restore peace in regions of instability are the Children’s Movement for Peace in Colombia and the National Movement of Street Boys and Girls in Brazil (see case study below). Some NGO programs, like the International Rescue Committee’s work in Ingushetia and the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children’s research in Kosovo have successfully integrated a youth perspective into their efforts to evaluate and improve programs for children.

Case Study: Global Awareness of Child Rights and The Rights Movement of Street Boys and Girls in Brazil

There are numerous examples of how globalization forces children into dangerous coping strategies causing insecurity for the children and their communities. But compelling examples also exist of how the rapid exchange of information and ideas can create momentum for innovative strategies to improve the security of children. One of the most promising outcomes of globalization is the information-sharing that has resulted in growing awareness of issues such as the rights of the child. Advocacy movements by children in one part of the world now have the potential to ignite initiatives across time, space and cultures. The rights movement of Brazilian street children is an important example of such a phenomenon.

As Stephen Jay Gould stated (1977), the greatest forces of evolution exist at the margins. Transformation and improvement can evolve out of the most adverse and dangerous contexts. Such is the story of Brazil and the Rights Movement of Street Boys and Girls that emerged in Brazil at the end of the 1970s and 1980s. Epidemic levels of violence and street children following Brazil’s failed “economic miracle” led to calls for a new response to children’s well-being. Sparked by the international Children’s Rights Movement that resulted to the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, The National Movement of Street Boys and Girls began in the early 1980s. Before this period, the phenomenon of street children was thought to be caused by children driven to the streets as a result of individual “social pathology” (Dos Santos, 2001). Opposing this view, a number of grassroots initiatives to address social and educational practices began to gain popularity, informed by the spirit of the evolving international child rights movement. Street children had previously been viewed as secondary citizens, the objects of “charitable intervention” rather than the holders of rights. This revised view of children was inspired by a new instrument for advocacy, the International Declaration of the Rights of Children disseminated by the United Nations.

In Brazil, it became recognized that multiple structural factors (economic, political, historical and cultural) were at the root of pressures leading children to the streets. The problem began to be understood more as exclusion than marginalization. The new rights culture of rights emphasized that children of all sorts had

the “right to have rights” (Dos Santos, 2001), including those living on the streets. The National Movement of Street Boys and Girls, whose leadership was shared between adults and street children, was one of several organizations that led the charge to integrate the needs and rights of street and working children into the legal foundations of the new democratic government. Working in coalitions, these organizations focused on combating violence against street children, and lobbying Congress to include child rights in the new Brazilian constitution (1988). Despite formidable opposition from conservative groups, a broad coalition with widespread public support, was able to push through progressive legislation incorporating and extending the basic content of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Legislation implementing the Child and Adolescent Statute was signed in to law on July 13, 1990 (Klees et. al. 2000).

III – Focusing on the Threats to Children’s Security

The following descriptions illustrate the interrelationship between the core dimensions of children’s security and describe how they are implied in major threats to security facing children today.

Children and Armed Conflict

- *Children affected by hostilities*

Armed conflict has a profound impact on the life, survival and development of children. The cost of war on children’s lives is extensive, multi-faceted and pervasive. Between 1945 and 1992, there have been 149 major armed conflicts killing an over 23 million people. UNICEF reports that conflicts in the last decade have killed an estimated 2 million children, leaving another 4 to 5 million disabled, 12 million homeless and over 1 million separated from their parents.

Many conflicts, despite their low-intensity, destabilize social infrastructures and systematically undermine the security of everyday life. Civilians, rather than combatants, are often key targets. In the “low intensity” conflict in Nicaragua “population, not territory is the target and psychological warfare is a central element” (Summerfield and Toser (1991) p. 85). Services and institutions that protect children and their families come under frequent attack. In deliberate attempts to bring harm to civilians, hospitals, health services, schools and churches are often systematically attacked and destroyed.

The changing technology and strategies of warfare have magnified hazards to children. Wars are increasingly fought within states and the proliferation of landmines and small arms has exposed children to sustained and pervasive violence. In many conflict zones, for every child that dies from armed attacks, three times as many are left severely wounded or disabled (United Nations, 1996).

Light, simple weaponry allows the exploitation of children as combatants in battle. In some conflict areas, a lightweight machine gun can be purchased for the same price as a chicken and the same weapon can be stripped and loaded by a ten year old in a matter of minutes.

War brings not only physical endangerment, but also exposure to violence and loss and the disruption of care giving relationships and support networks. UNICEF estimates that 10 million children have experienced psychological “trauma” or distress due to war. War interrupts the predictability and structure of day-to-day life. Children’s opportunities to attend school and develop skills for future success are destroyed or undermined, often extinguishing their sense of hope for the future. The psychosocial impacts of war on children remain understudied. But these longer-term impacts present serious obstacles to reconstructing the lives of children and their communities.

Growing concern for the enormous impact of war on the lives of children led the United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali to appoint a Special Representative, Graça Machel, former first-lady of Mozambique, to investigate the impact of armed conflict on children. Since launched in November 1996, the

United Nations Study of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children has increased awareness of the needs of children in war. The importance of the issue has led to initiatives including the appointment of Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, Olara A. Otunnu. The Special Representative pursues an ambitious mandate in collaboration with UNICEF, other UN Agencies and NGOs. His work has shown that many of the worst impacts of war on children can be attenuated or even prevented through adequate and timely interventions and appropriate support. This growing awareness of how to improve the protection of the rights, welfare and well-being of war-affected children, must be implemented in new security strategies.

Displaced children

The numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons are among the most important measures of the impact of armed conflict on civilians and children. Although the 1990's saw a considerable decline in refugee numbers, 40 million people, one quarter of the world's population are currently displaced due to conflict or human rights violations (Machel, 2000). Between 20 and 25 million of these are internally-displaced within their own countries (Bagshaw, 2000).

The lives of children are dramatically altered by displacement. The majority of displaced people are women and children; they constitute as much as 80% of some refugee and IDP populations. Displacement uproots communities and destroys the social networks that protect children. Living in a refugee or IDP camp poses great threats. Overcrowded camps increase the risk of transmitting infectious diseases and can make women and children vulnerable to sexual assault (Shanks & Schull, 2000).

However, well-organized, staffed and secure camp settings also present opportunities to improve the security of children. Safe and supportive environments for children can be recreated in refugee camps and even in conflict zones by establishing "child friendly spaces". Refugee and IDP camps can also be used to provide education, health and psychosocial programs where none had existed before.

Recent policy changes, such as Security Council Resolution 1314, call for specific protections and humanitarian access to refugees and IDPs with particular attention to children. The Machel Review Document recognizes that security risks facing children in these situations are interrelated. The Document noted that "without special support, displaced children will not survive the overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of food and unclean water they encounter. Multisectoral approaches to health, nutrition, child rights and protection are the only way to protect children in these circumstances" (Machel, 2000). The fundamental dimensions of children's security must be at the forefront of efforts in displacement situations. In this way, an otherwise undesirable experience can be used as an opportunity to improve the foundations for children's life, survival and development.

Child soldiers

The three main reasons youth become child combatants are forced recruitment, coercive recruitment, and voluntary participation, according to a 1996 study. (Goodwin-Gil and Cohn 1996) As social infrastructures are destroyed in today's conflicts, joining a military group may be a compelling option for young people needing to secure their protection and survival. To the perpetrators of violence, children form attractive recruits. Child care workers and counselors interviewed in a report on child combatants in Liberia (Human Rights Watch Africa, 1994) list many reasons why children make good soldiers: they are extremely obedient; oftentimes fearless in battle; and easily manipulated". An observer revealed "children are easy to command...they have excessive energy that can be used...and they can stand conditions that adults can't" (p. 24).

The resounding message of Graça Machel in her report to the Secretary General was "Children have no

place in war”. Despite the obviousness of this point to some, it is hotly contested on cultural and political grounds. The ugly reality is undeniable: in the 145 or so armed conflicts which have proliferated since 1945, children have been affected by, and actively involved in, the fighting. Until we are able to implement international norms prohibiting child combatants and present more positive opportunities to young people to secure their own security through other means, the problem of child combatants will persist

- *Street children*

When relationships with caregivers are disrupted or become unhealthy, children may seek to cope by seeking connections and relationships elsewhere. Research on street children indicates that homeless and abandoned children develop their own social networks to provide the emotional and instrumental support they need to survive. These new coping methods, however, may clash with traditional views of children in the affected society. (Ennew 1995) As a result, street children are often seen as urban blight, rather than rights-holders trying to cope with social and economic pressures and the lack of a family to provide for them. Such children are often “problematized” (DosSantos, 2001) or scapegoated for crimes in order to justify police “clean ups” and summary executions (Ennew, 1995).

In Focus: Children of the Street, Children on the Street

Recent research on street children in Brazil reveals that “street children” (poor and working-class children who use the streets as a living, working and recreational space) tend to maintain some ties to their families of origin (Moulin & Pereira, 2000). A 1989 conference on street children in Bogotá distinguished children *of* the streets from children *on* the streets. Children of the street were defined as those who claimed the streets “as their principle residence in substitution of the family—even if tenuous ties remain”. For these children, although treacherous, life on the streets has become their “primary source of growth and stabilization” (p. 49). Children in the street are “children in a survival strategy” (ibid.). This means that these children and adolescents, although maintaining connections to their family of origin, are involved in activities to ensure “survival”. These activities may involve participation in formal, informal and even illegal economies (ibid.). These children are working to survive. Again, it can be seen that the “problem” of street children is an attempt by children, and sometimes their families, to cope with pressures they cannot otherwise met.

Child Sexual Exploitation & Sexual Violence

Unstable times often create an increase in the trafficking of women and girls through the loosening of controls and limited alternatives for females in many war-affected and violent regions. Child prostitution is associated with manipulation but may be at the same time a survival strategy employed by girls without other choices to provide for themselves and their families. In some places, families sell their daughters into sexual slavery, as a strategy for family economic survival. Even international peacekeeping forces may be consumers of child prostitution and perpetrators of sexual exploitation in a number of the world’s most poor and conflict-ravaged zones. All domains of children’s security, from physical safety, basic physiological needs, access to education and livelihood, and community connection and relationships, are implicated in the sexual exploitation of children.

In Focus:

Sexual Violence and Child Sexual Exploitation

Sexual violence, especially against girls and young women is an extremely important dimension of children's insecurity, especially in the light of often undetected consequences. Sexual abuse of children is associated with a range of physical, social, emotional, and academic impacts (Ticket & Putnam, 1998). Although sexual abuse and violence affects both boys and girls, girls and young women are the more frequent victims. Most studies of the West document a far higher prevalence of sexual abuse against girls than boys with an estimated ratio of 4 abused girls to every abused boy (ibid.). During wars and civil conflict, girls and women are particularly vulnerable to rape and other forms of sexual violence (Swiss, 1998; Shanks & Schull, 2000). With increasing international travel and new channels of communication via the Internet and other media, a burgeoning industry of international child sexual exploitation and trafficking in girls and women now thrives. Recent data indicates that the Internet has become an increasingly important medium for the exploitation of children. Traffickers and pedophiles can use these technologies to develop networks of predatory and illegal activity (Newsweek, 2001). Reports from Kosovo and Chechnya reveal that families are highly protective of their daughters, fearing the real threat of their abduction into sexual slavery. This form of insecurity is particularly harsh for girls who may be restricted in their freedom and their rights to pursue education and other activities as a consequence.

Criminal activities

Young people may turn to crime to find strategies to survive impoverishment and lack of opportunity. The involvement of marginalized groups such as street children in criminal activities reveals their lack of alternative ways to secure their basic needs and protections. Youth may also become involved in gangs as a means to rediscover a sense of identity or connectedness. Adolescent gangs may be involved in serious violence. Evidence from Cali in Colombia reveals that more than a tenth of homicides were carried out by adolescent gangs. (De Roux 1994) Adolescents also formed the majority of the hired killers or "sicarios" who were responsible for over a third of murders in Cali. Initial efforts to address gang violence in Cali recognized the need to involve youth in consultation and decision-making and in 1993 the "Pacto Social por la Convivencia" (Pact for Social Coexistence) was signed by both government officials and members of four youth gangs. The pact shows that it was important to recognize and consult gang members in the quest for solutions and involve adolescents themselves in designing proposals for negotiations. In addition the community was involved in the process of negotiations and finally, the pact acknowledged "... the importance of the gang for the adolescents in strengthening their sense of identity and security" (ibid.).

IV - Conclusion

This paper reviewed the various dimensions of children's security. It illustrated with concrete examples the importance of these dimensions and of the threats to children's security, as well as the significance of the strategies developed by the children themselves to cope with these threats.

When globalisation loosens the boundaries of social and human experience world wide, children's security and the experience of childhood itself undergo major transformations in many parts of the world. A number of international instruments exist for promoting the rights of children and their protection. But when international norms and state efforts fail to meet the basic security needs of children, many young people

are left to survive and cope alone.

Children must be viewed as agents acting on their own behalf. They also bear rights and entitlements that are highly vulnerable group in situations of insecurity and conflict. Children themselves, particularly adolescents, play a key role in both undermining and building human security. Failure to ensure the basic tenets of children's security increases the risk that children will be propelled into the most perilous and damaging coping strategies. The coping efforts of children must not be ignored or minimized. Where they take positive forms, these efforts can form the building blocks for survival and healthy development. Our commitment to children in zones of conflict must go beyond simply providing for their physical survival. In particular, we must understand the need to maintain children's links to their communities and realize that, in order to survive, children need the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential and maintain a sense of the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the attention of the Members of the Human Security Network for improving the security of children

The following recommendations have been elaborated on the basis of current research and illustrate rather than cover in any comprehensive manner, human security strategies of greatest relevance to children.

Focusing on the core dimensions of children's security:

When addressing the source of children's insecurity, Members of the Human Security Network should:

- Assess the impact of instability on the core dimensions of children's security as a roadmap for prevention and intervention;*
- Identify survival strategies by children as early warning indicators of children's insecurity;*
- Identify and address dangerous manipulation of children's coping strategies by others;*
- Address core threats to security of children in a holistic manner understanding the essential interdependence of these dimensions of children's security;*
- Develop mechanisms for the meaningful and sustained participation of young people, their families and communities in human security initiatives that affect their lives;*
- As child development is a long-term process, design strategies to address children's security that are long-term and sustainable; avoid one-shot, brief-lived approaches.*
- Support grassroots community practices to protect children (community efforts to broaden community connection and social supports for children, grassroots initiatives to promote health, learning, safety or legal reforms for children's protection).*
- Recognize and support traditional practices and community norms and values that improve children's security;*
- Recognize and support the positive and adaptive survival strategies employed by young people and their families;*

Focusing on the specific security needs of children in armed conflict:

When addressing the source of children's insecurity, Members of the Human Security Network should:

- Ensure that the needs of children are on the agendas of reconstruction and peace processes (e.g., draft accords and delegate funds to strengthen children's security through legal protection and rights promotion and, strengthen agencies of health, education, social services and child protection);*
- Support and promote the participation of youth in decisions that affect them taking into consideration their evolving capacities and best interests as expressed in the CRC. In particular, provide opportunities for adolescents to exercise their capacities in peace negotiations, peace building, and reconstruction processes;*
- Provide remedial access to educational and vocational opportunity for children affected by prolonged insecurity and disruption of opportunity;*
- Recognize the connection between loss of opportunities such as lack of education, adverse mental health and ongoing risks of insecurity;*
- Broaden the definition of psychosocial interventions for war-affected children to include efforts to restore structure, safety and social supports for entire populations of young people (e.g., emergency education programs) that are broad in approach and are designed to help buffer potentially traumatic exposures;*
- Recognize the interdependent nature of children's security in funding and planning the disbursement of humanitarian aid programmes. Avoid separating or prioritising one dimension over others; favor multisectoral, integrated and sustainable responses;*
- Consult young people and respect their security concerns in planning peace processes and negotiating peace agreements. Channel the capacities of adolescents in peace processes, peace building and reconstruction via guided and sustained participation in all phases of conflict (early-warning, active conflict, post-conflict and reconstruction);*
- Examine and respond to the pressures leading children to engage as combatants. Ensure that Demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation processes address key dimensions of children's security;*

Focusing on the specific security needs of children in other difficult situations:

When addressing the source of children's insecurity, Members of the Human Security Network should:

- Identify and hold third parties accountable for the manipulation and abuse of children and neglect of their rights particularly with reference to dangerous survival strategies that children employ (e.g., child prostitution, acting as armed combatants and dangerous forms of child labor);*
- Respect multiple forms of family including the recognition of child-headed households and households run by elderly caregivers; work with, rather than against, the survival strategies of young people, particularly for aid distribution and outreach of services;*
- Develop gender-sensitive rehabilitative initiatives for girls affected by sexual exploitation and violence by addressing their safety, physical and mental health, their connection to supportive and healthy relationships, and their opportunities to pursue self-sufficiency through education or skill building;*
- Address dangerous survival strategies, such as children living on the streets, in gangs or engaged in other criminal activity, via integrated responses with buy-in from health, social services, juvenile justice, education and community leadership such as religious and nongovernmental organizations;*

- Promote capacity building in child rights monitoring and protection among community grassroots organizations and nongovernmental organizations addressing the security needs of children in especially difficult circumstances;

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The Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University is a new research and policy program that specializes in research and advisory services on humanitarian operations and the protection of civilians in conflict areas. The Program advises organizations such as the United Nations, governments and non-governmental actors and focuses on the protection of vulnerable groups, conflict prevention, strategic planning for human security, and the role of information technology in emergency response. With regard to children, the Program's work focuses on the specific vulnerabilities of children and their particular burden in humanitarian crisis situations.

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