



Provisional programme

Protecting children from extreme violence: towards a more comprehensive approach to prevention and response

Monday 3 – Wednesday 5 October 2016 | WP1495

Children's vulnerability to conflict, particularly to recruitment and use by parties to conflict is well recognised.

Some progress has of course been made in addressing the overall issue of recruitment and use of children through a range of legal and normative frameworks as well as several UN Security Council Resolutions. However child protection and other humanitarian agencies are increasingly challenged to adequately address grave violations of children's rights and respond to child protection needs, in an environment where the nature of conflict is increasingly complex with transnational influences and where the forms of violence are increasingly violent and extreme.

Much examination has been made of the changing dynamics of conflict over the past decade or so, highlighting a number of key factors. These include the recognition of many of the characteristics of a number of armed groups as 'aligned or governed by specific extremist ideologies'¹; changes in existing drivers such as poverty, exclusion and marginalisation; the transnational nature of conflict, demonstrated by how armed groups often operate across national borders and the use of social media as a key recruitment and propaganda tool; and the extreme nature of violence and control used by armed groups and the involvement of children in such asymmetric warfare. The geographic spread of extreme violence and its impact on children can be seen across the world, as in Syria's devastating civil war, Nigeria's ongoing struggle with Boko Haram and East Africa's efforts against Al-Shabaab. The breakdown of law and order and fragmentation of civil society in countries from Mali and others in the Sahel, to the Central African Republic and Southern Thailand has also provided widespread opportunities for children to be exposed and vulnerable to extreme violence.

¹ "Exploiting Disorder", Special Report No. 1, International Crisis Group, March 2016

In association with The Paris Principles Steering Group



Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for
CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT



Save the Children

The impact of socio-economic instability and armed conflict in a variety of contexts has led to large numbers of children being displaced, separated from their families, and vulnerable to being forcibly abducted, and forcibly recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups which are engaged in extreme violence. Children and young people growing up in refugee or IDP camps, rural villages or underdeveloped areas are often ignored, marginalised or mistreated by authorities, including those in detention. Many view enlistment as the best option to ensure some degree of security, while others may also become disenfranchised by or disillusioned with the society in which they live, or influenced by others who encourage them to join armed groups who engage in extreme violence. This has had negative consequences for development efforts and is leading to perpetual cycles of conflict, thus undermining peace and security.

Even when children attempt to return to normal life and/or a degree of peace returns, the impact of and exposure to extreme violence often leaves them traumatised, and raises unprecedented challenges to their reintegration in communities. The social and psychological impact on families and wider communities can be devastating, as they recover from their own experiences of conflict and extreme violence whilst needing to support children in their recovery and reintegration. Furthermore, the reaction of communities and authorities can also gravely impact them resulting in stigma and even detention.

In examinations and responses to the changing dynamics of conflict and fragility there has been debate in how this phenomenon should be termed. Concern has been voiced by many humanitarian actors in relation to the sensitivities of terminology and interpretation. There is also recognition that many of the forms of violence that children are being forced to engage in are not new, however, the way such violence is interpreted and understood is changing the way children's involvement is considered and being responded to. In raising these concerns, Child Protection practitioners in particular, have emphasised the need to focus on the rights and needs of children affected by such violence, specifically the need for all actions taken to prevent and respond to the involvement of children with armed forces and groups being done within the ambit of international humanitarian and human rights law and the Paris Principles and regional frameworks. Furthermore, focus on a child-rights perspective that is based on the needs of the child, family and strengthening the resilience of the community is key for effective process for the prevention of recruitment as well as the release and reintegration of children and post-conflict recovery. In view of concerns about sensitivity of interpretation and the need for actions to focus on the rights and needs of children affected by such violence, Child Protection practitioners have favoured the term Extreme Violence, with this preference informing the focus of this conference.

This conference will provide a much needed opportunity and space for humanitarian, development practitioners, policy makers and child protection specialists to come together to examine the issues of extreme violence and how greater understanding of the issue and its impact on the rights and protection of children can inform future programming approaches and policy.

As such the conference will have three main outcomes:

- Informing programmatic guidance on addressing recruitment and use of children, including for extreme violence, currently being developed by the Paris Principles

Steering Group and its members

- Informing recommendations for actions in support of addressing the recruitment and use of children, particularly for extreme violence, as part of the 10th Anniversary of the Paris Principles and Commitments, to be held in February, 2017.
- Gaining evidence to inform member states to take pragmatic approaches in responding to the needs of children and young people when developing legislation and policy around extreme violence.

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Monday 3 October

1300-1430

Participants arrive and buffet lunch available

1500

Welcome and introduction

Gary Wilton

Visiting Programme Director, Wilton Park, Steyning

1515-1645

1. Progress and challenges in the protection of children in extreme violence

This session will set the conference in context, looking at the progress made in the protection of children in extreme violence, as well as some of the challenges, including the increasingly protracted nature of crises and growing youth radicalisation.

1645-1730

Photograph followed by tea/coffee

1730-1900

2. The changing nature of conflict: implications for child protection

Discussion will focus on the changing nature of conflict and its implications for child protection- and how the child protection community must adapt.

1900

Reception followed by dinner

Tuesday 4 October

0800-0845

Breakfast

0915-1045

3. Improving the resilience of children, families and communities

Recognising the extent to which socio-economic conditions of families and communities, and the disenfranchisement of adolescents and youth contribute to recruitment and use for extreme violence, this session will focus on actions to identify appropriate prevention interventions that are supportive of families, communities and children within environments vulnerable to extreme violence.

1045-1115

Tea/coffee

1115-1245

4. A fresh look at release and reintegration processes

This discussion will consider how, recognising the need not to be reliant on formal cessation of hostilities or peace agreements, DDR and release and reintegration processes can be child-focused, respectful of child rights, and supportive of broader peace-building initiatives

1300-1430	Lunch
1500-1630	<p>5. Breakout groups to discuss sessions 4 and 5 followed by presentation of discussion points and recommendations to inform discussion on day 3</p> <p>This session will see four parallel working groups looking at some of the key issues and brainstorming areas for collaboration and innovation. Topics TBC.</p>
1630-1700	Tea/coffee
1700-1830	6. Feedback from breakout groups in session 5
1830-1835	<p>7. eQuestionnaire</p> <p>Completion of online eQuestionnaire</p>
1900	Reception followed by dinner

Wednesday 5 October

0800-0845	Breakfast and checkout
0915-1045	<p>8. Protecting children, supporting development: identifying sustainable strategies</p> <p>This session will consider how to support development whilst ensuring that children are protected? Can a child centred approach represent an opportunity to better tackle poverty and promote peace? This session will take a holistic view of how to better protect children from violence over the long term through promoting economic and social development.</p>
1045-1115	Tea/coffee
1115-1300	<p>9. Towards a more comprehensive approach: conclusions and next steps</p> <p>The Concluding Panel will address the question: what are the key themes emerging from discussion, how they inform the intended outcomes of the conference and following actions.</p>
1300	Lunch
1400	Participants depart

This is a preview programme and as such may be subject to change.

This is an invitation only conference.

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