

Working with
children in
unstable situations

Principles and Concepts to
Guide Psychosocial
Responses

UNICEF

2003

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Introduction

The Aims of ‘Working with Children in Unstable Situations’

‘Working with Children in Unstable Settings’ is a publication designed to provide UNICEF staff and UNICEF partner staff with principles and concepts that can assist them to respond to the psychosocial needs of children in natural disasters and social emergencies such as armed conflict and other forms of violence. These psychosocial principles and concepts inform both emergency responses and subsequent programmatic responses post-emergency.

It aims to introduce humanitarian workers to psychosocial principles and UNICEF’s position on these principles. It provides a number of examples from field work of how these principles have been turned into concrete actions.

‘Working with Children in Unstable Situations’ is not a day-to-day programming tool. Rather, it is a manual outlining UNICEF’s orientation to the psychosocial principles integral to any work with children in unstable settings.

The development, provision and strengthening of psychosocial support services for children and their care givers is an integral part of UNICEF’s Core Corporate Commitments (CCCs) in Emergencies. The UNICEF Technical Guidance note on Psychosocial Response has shaped the orientation of this manual and further elaborates UNICEF’s approach to psychosocial work.

Many of the principles have been drawn from UNICEF materials, 'The Refugee Experience', a psychosocial training manual produced by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, and material from Actions for the Rights of Children (ARC).

The material in 'Working with Children in Unstable Situations' is for humanitarian workers who want to know more about assisting children to manage their own lives in uncertain and unstable situations.

The Structure of 'Working with Children in Unstable Situations'

'Working with Children in Unstable Situations' has 4 main sections.

1. *An introduction* to the nature and challenge of *Unstable Situations* and the impact of these circumstances on the psychosocial well-being of children and their families.
2. *Children and their needs*. This section addresses the psychosocial needs of children and the factors that influence these needs.
3. The *Policies and Programming Principles of UNICEF* that inform psychosocial actions are outlined in the third section.
4. The fourth section explores ways of *Addressing the Needs of Children, their Families and Friends* and presents a number of examples from UNICEF and UNICEF partners' field work.

Unstable Situations and psychosocial activities

The fieldwork of UNICEF is conducted in unstable situations associated with social emergencies and natural disasters. UNICEF considers an emergency to be any situation in which the lives and well-being of children are at such risk that extraordinary action, i.e. urgently required action beyond that routinely provided, must be mobilised to ensure their survival, protection and well-being.

A complex emergency is defined by UNICEF as “a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing United Nations country program.”

Such complex emergencies are typically characterised by extensive violence and loss of life; massive displacements of people; widespread damage to societies and economies; the need for large scale, multi-faceted humanitarian assistance; the hindrance or prevention of humanitarian assistance by political and military constraints; and significant security risks for humanitarian relief workers in some areas.

Social emergencies such as war, economic instability, and civil unrest and natural disasters including floods, hurricanes and drought have enormous consequences for communities, families and children. Many of these consequences are inter-related: war induces separation and exploitation, drought can result in political and economic instability and exploitation.

'Working with Children in Unstable Situations' will explore the impact of unstable situations on children and their families. It will elaborate guiding principles to address the impact on children and their families to assist them to resume their lives as soon as possible.

During times of natural disasters and social emergencies, individuals and communities are subjected to great strain. The effects of such disasters on individuals and families vary considerably. In the context of these disasters, children and families actively engage in the rebuilding of their lives. Such experiences have a heavy cost on people, with individuals frequently experiencing strong emotions such as grief and loss, extreme anger, vengeance, mistrust and fear. It is essential that these feelings are not ignored while homes are rebuilt and social structures re-established and livelihoods recommenced.

In unstable settings children need strong and responsive social supports to help in their development and well-being. The loss or separation from a caregiver can have long term negative effects on the child, such as starvation or neglect.

Poverty and political instability can lead to children engaging in crime and armed military action. This can produce further chaos and turmoil for the community. In settings where poor health and nutrition are prevalent, war and other disasters compound health conditions and result in continuous patterns of poverty, violence, and insecurity.

It is in circumstances such as these that psychosocial activities are developed to address both the emotional well-being and social needs of affected populations. Programs that address the needs of children are vital. Children are key resources for the future and their age can make them particularly vulnerable in situations of instability.

Social Emergencies

Social emergencies include war, terrorism, political persecution, violence and torture, and situations of economic or political instability.

Economic instability

Social emergencies render communities and nations vulnerable to economic instability. As a consequence of the UN sanctions in Iraq there has been an increase in child mortality. This has resulted from families having to sell goods and move to less suitable accommodation in order to survive. Families have had less money to buy food affecting their children's nutritional intake. In some circumstances mothers have become caught up in abusive relationships that have developed as a consequence of the strain on the communities. It has been noted that women have less time to attend to their children's well-being because of the additional work they have to undertake to survive and the extra distances travelled to access limited resources.

War

War undermines the very fabric of societies. Houses are destroyed, social infrastructures devastated, and community relationships shattered. In most recent conflicts, significant resources such as hospitals, mosques, churches and social services have been the targets of warring parties. The loss of these key resources and the breakdown in civil society has a profound effect on the community and can greatly influence children's well-being. In many wars children experience their homes being destroyed, witness killings and can become separated from parents or other caregivers. Many also become maimed by land mines used in war.

‘Now the children want to learn, although it is difficult for them to concentrate in this situation, because they, like the teachers, are upset, distracted and tired’.

School attendance drops when there is a high level of violence in a particular area, as parents prefer to keep their children at home. In areas of chronic violence, or where there is a total or night curfew as in Hebron, attendance remains low since parents are concerned about the violence. Some schools have been closed because they are near settlements that generate high levels of violence. One village in South Gaza is completely surrounded by Israeli settlements and the sea, and its PA school has been closed since the conflict began because no teachers can get to this village as a result of closures and settler attacks.

The most recent violence in the Occupied territories has led to reduced access to education and other basic services including urgent medical care. Palestinian education systems have a long history of significant achievements, but occupation and violence jeopardises these. Many children have been killed or injured in the violence and many more have been psychologically affected. Schools have been damaged by gunfire, and teachers at one primary school noted that children are less likely to have paper and pens, or pocket money, and that some of them are hungry.

Save the Children, (2001) Palestine: The education of children at risk

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanoes, drought, floods and famine may have profound affects on the psychosocial well-being of children and their families.

Enormous damage is caused by earthquakes which result in large numbers of people living without proper shelter, and very strong demands expressed for immediate assistance to the affected populations. Aside from the hardships of daily life, the survivors, adults and children, may experience losses and injuries and be exposed to other distressing events. These may include observing buildings collapsing, feeling that death is inevitable for oneself or for a loved-one, seeing and/or handling dead bodies, witnessing someone dying or being injured, seeing dismembered bodies or body pieces, being trapped under debris, or trying to help in the rescue efforts - sometimes succeeding, sometimes not. For children, there may also be the additional distress of being separated from the family.

On 17 August and 12 November 1999, two earthquakes devastated the populated and industrial north-western parts of Turkey. Although the exact number of deaths is unknown, the Turkish authorities report that over 18,000 people were killed and 49,000 people injured during both earthquakes.

As a result of the earthquakes, many schools lost materials and supplies. In addition, many students lost their houses and all their possessions. UNICEF has been identifying schools most affected by the earthquake and supplying materials to classes.

UNICEF (2000) Turkey: What UNICEF is doing

Hurricanes and floods can cause widespread displacement and also create further disruptions such as risk of disease, a risk that is worsened by the disruption of most basic services, including health, water, sanitation and education.

Hurricane Mitch

When Hurricane Mitch swept across Central America in October 1998, the poorest populations in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua bore the brunt of its impact. More than 500,000 people lost their homes and more than 3 million people have been affected by the destruction left by the hurricane. Just in Honduras, half of the agricultural crops have been destroyed or damaged. In some areas, more than 20 years of development have been virtually wiped out. The loss of life and devastation of property resulting from the hurricane was compounded by human factors. Population pressure, large-scale deforestation and the cultivation of marginal lands provoked mudslides. Flooding was aggravated by a lack of adequate watershed management. The poorest people, living in marginal, high-risk areas, such as riverbanks, bore the brunt of the impact. Hurricane Mitch has directly affected over 3 million people, and over half a million people lost their homes. The loss of life, diminished nutritional status of vulnerable groups and damage to infrastructure and agricultural production has destroyed 10 years of development in some areas. In addition, widespread displacement has challenged traditional coping mechanisms, threatened disease outbreaks and disrupted schooling for the region's children. In Honduras, Hurricane Mitch destroyed decades of achievements in the education sector. If one primary school classroom were rebuilt each day, it would take eight years to replace what was lost in one tragic week

UNICEF (1999) Humanitarian Response to Children, Central America

Circumstances and Consequences of Unstable Situations Affecting Children

Separation

Nearly 93 000 children were separated from their families during Rwanda's 1994 genocidal terror. Ingabire, a six-year-old girl, recalls 'soldiers everywhere, and everyone shouting in the dark' as she tried to cling to her mother and was swept away by the crowd. Along with 40 000 other children, she was registered as unaccompanied by a computerised program run by the IRC, the UNHCR and UNICEF.

Black, M (2001) Growing up alone. London: UNICEF

These are children who have become separated from their parents or caregivers. The risk of separation greatly increases in situations of conflict, famine, natural disasters and other unstable situations. Children can become separated either accidentally during evacuation, when fleeing from danger, or deliberately – when children are abandoned, abducted, recruited into an armed force, orphaned or have run away from home. Children who have been separated are at an increased risk of various forms of abuse and exploitation. Many separated children are vulnerable to becoming involved in criminal activity and drug abuse.

Unaccompanied girls are at especially high risk of sexual abuse; and boys, of forced or 'voluntary' participation in violence and armed conflict. UNICEF also recognises that children can be exposed to risk in other contexts. For example, violence against children in the family, the community, in schools or other institutions, or harmful traditional practices; exploitation including the worst forms of child labour and trafficking, and those children who are without primary caregivers.

Angola

The most recent phase of the war profoundly impacted children, who comprised nearly half the 1.2 million displaced people. It is estimated that approximately 500,000 children died as a direct result of the war and that 15,000 children were “unaccompanied,” that is, separated from their families and without adult supervision. Throughout Angola, hunger, disease, and the destruction of health facilities boosted morbidity rates. By 1993, UNICEF estimated that nearly 840,000 children were living in “especially difficult circumstances.” UNICEF also estimated that 320 out of 1,000 children die before they had reached the age of five years. Large numbers of children were killed or maimed by landmines, which were used widely throughout Angola.

Wessells & Monteiro: Healing, Mobilisation and Social Integration: Community Based Assistance for War-Affected Angolan Children

Displacement

Internally displaced and refugee children are vulnerable and at risk of sexual exploitation, HIV/AIDS, violence and military recruitment. This is particularly the case if they are separated from their parents or other care-givers. Many of these children survive on the street where they are at an increased level of risk. Other children who become separated from their parents head up households of their own, where they take on adult responsibilities, but at the same time, may not be able to compete with adult-headed households for food and services.

Sexual Exploitation

Children in unstable situations are at high risk of sexual violence and inappropriate sexual activity. For refugee children, the breakdown of traditional family and community protection mechanisms and the tenuous circumstances in which they often find themselves add to the risk. Armed conflict increases the danger of sexual violence and exploitation. The consequences of sexual exploitation are severe, including

emotional trauma, health risks such as the contraction of HIV/AIDS, and the physical wounds inflicted by rape. Some children have sex to obtain food, shelter and money.

Sexual violence and exploitation have potentially devastating effects on the physical and mental health of children, including their ability to learn and communicate. It also undermines the strength of their families and communities. Such violence can take a variety of forms including rape, commercial exploitation and domestic abuse. UNHCR defines sexual violence as all forms of sexual threat, assault, interference, and exploitation, including 'statutory rape' and molestation without physical harm or penetration.

Perpetrators of sexual violence and exploitation are those who directly or indirectly coerce, trick, encourage, organise and maintain the exploitation, as well as those adults who participate in the violence themselves. These people can range from members of armed forces to peacekeeping troops to family members, to local and foreign consumers and organisers. Cases of abuse within the family are particularly difficult to deal with as children and adults may be reluctant to reveal incidents of abuse, especially in cultures where the raising of children is seen as a private concern. However, abuse within the family is particularly serious simply because the very people charged with the main responsibility for protecting the child are failing to do so.

Military Activity

Children participate in hostilities, and the activities associated with them, in several ways. Some enter through compulsory recruitment by conscription, that is, recruitment by 'official' channels; others are used by local militias or village headmen to fill 'quotas' of participation demanded by the military or other armed groups. Other children are victims of forced recruitment by armed groups. Some groups target schools and urban areas for 'sweeps' with the aim of abducting children. Finally, some children 'volunteer' to join armed groups. This decision can be due to political and cultural reasons, in settings where

participation in military or warlike activities is glorified. Other children join as a means of protecting themselves and their families from harassment.

The term child soldier does not just refer to children who are armed. Many children get caught up in conflict as porters, scouts, cooks and in some instances, as sexual partners for the armed members. Boys and girls often have multiple roles in military groups and both boys and girls can be active combatants.

Regardless of how children come to participate in armed conflict, or what comprises their roles in armed groups, their experience is generally characterised by heightened risk to physical, emotional and social well-being. The regular accounts that children provide of sexual abuse, and being forced to commit atrocities against their own families or communities, appear to represent a pattern of armed groups exerting control over the young recruits. This is likely aimed at preventing them returning to their normal lives, and at developing a 'need' for association with a new community i.e. the armed group.

Returning home after discharge or escape can be very difficult. It is important to prepare families and communities to be reunited with their children, especially those who are not welcome for having been child soldiers. This includes girls coming back with their babies.

Children who have been displaced, have witnessed or have been victims of violence, and have been forced to take part in violence themselves can suffer from serious psychological distress and are in need of assistance. However, experience has proven that the vast majority of them have strong resilience on which they can build to rapidly recover and develop as reasonable members of their communities. For this reason, UNICEF has concentrated most of its attention and resources on working with communities to re-create an environment that would protect children, re-establish routines based on learning and play activities, and foster normalcy. Giving safe opportunities for children and young people to participate in

the debate on issues that affect their communities is also seen as a priority.

Here is the story of a young boy who joined the rebel forces on becoming separated from his parents:

A.A. is a 14 year-old child who, as a young boy, lived with his parents. Prior to the outbreak of the rebel war he was a primary pupil in class IV. When the rebels struck his home, A.A. became separated from his family. He lost contact with his parents and became his own caretaker. Several attempts to look for his family were futile. He became disinterested in all children's activities as a result of the loss of contact with his parents. He was often hungry and lacked any sense of direction. As a means of associating himself with some group and attaching himself to an elder, he voluntarily gave himself up to the Army Commander and was recruited as a "vigilante" at a military check point. He served as a checkpoint attendant for two months. When the rebel war intensified in that part of the country, the army embarked on recruiting more personnel to fight the enemy. Vigilantes and checkpoint attendants became the army's first target. A.A. together with other children was given an emergency training in weaponry and was handed an AK 47 to fight alongside the army. For several months, A.A. was engaged in active combat and earned himself the nickname "Nasty Killer", on account of the ways he murdered and mutilated rebels captured by his troop.

Action for the Rights of Children (2001): Critical Issues – Child Soldiers

“Trauma” and “Psychosocial Well-being”

Unstable situations represent circumstances where major events involving threat and loss are common. These events can represent a major assault on the capacities and well-being of affected individuals. The idea of events producing an ‘assault’ on an individual’s coping capacities is the origin of describing such events as ‘traumatic’. The idea behind ‘trauma’ is that events are so demanding that normal coping capacities cannot deal with the distress caused and, indeed, such coping capacities are themselves often undermined.

However the psychosocial perspectives suggests that, in the main, people and communities *do* have the capacity to cope with the distress caused by such events and any help needed is primarily at the community level.

The word ‘psychosocial’ underlines the dynamic relationship between psychological and social effects, each continually influencing the other.

This suggests that each person is influenced by the integration of:

- the mind, thinking, emotions, feelings and behaviour, which are the *psycho* or psychological components
- the *social* world or context in which we live, the environment, culture, traditions, spirituality, interpersonal relationships with family, community and friends and life tasks such as school or work

The association of these two elements in the term ‘psychosocial’ demonstrates the close and dynamic relationship and interaction between the two. Psychosocial well-being is a process of transition towards greater meaning, balance, connectedness and wholeness, both within the individual and between individuals and their environment.

Both the psychological and social components are essential to the normal developmental process, and evolve with physical growth and maturation. This means that psychosocial needs change as an individual grows and develops.

The aim of psychosocial activities therefore are to address children's issues and needs in a holistic manner *inside* wider developmental contexts such as education or health care. This will create an integrated developmental approach to promoting psychosocial well-being.

Psychosocial programming is rights-based, child-friendly, gender and age responsive, and culturally sensitive and sustainable. It takes full account of the best interests of the child, and includes them as partners in decision-making processes. Psychosocial activities build upon a child's natural resilience and family and community support mechanisms, and attempt to provide additional experiences that will promote coping and positive development, despite the adversities experienced.

From a trauma perspective the framework usually used to consider the experience of such trauma is the psychiatric diagnosis of PTSD or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This framework links a number of symptoms (such as the experience of nightmares, 'flashbacks' regarding experienced events, emotional 'numbing' etc.) with the identification of the disorder. Using this framework, researchers have identified increased levels of PTSD in many groups impacted by natural or social disasters across the world. This has led to many humanitarian agencies identifying populations with high rates of PTSD and to the planning of programs to address this.

The use of the framework of PTSD to understand the level of well-being of populations impacted by unstable situations has, however, been severely criticised. The fundamental basis of these criticisms is that the framework does not reflect important aspects of the context in which an individual has experienced events. The PTSD category focuses on certain

aspects of experience but not others. Critics argue that the aspects of experience focused upon are relevant to a more 'western' understanding of well-being or economic deprivation underlying suffering. The PTSD framework can't easily take on board, for example, the more collective experience of distress in non-western societies.

Work amongst displaced youth in Angola using a standardised PTSD assessment suggested three-quarters of those interviewed could be categorised as suffering from PTSD. Responses such as:

'For me to forget is very difficult... how can I forget what happened?'

suggests the existence of just the sort of intrusive memories associated with this disorder. However, the full version of the response suggests a rather wider interpretation:

'For me to forget is very difficult because the work here is very heavy. When you remember the past you think if it wasn't the war I wouldn't be doing this heavy work. I collect firewood sometimes many hours a day. I work from sunrise to sunset for very little money... how can I forget what happened?'

Source: Carola Eyber, cited in A Ager (2002) Psychosocial Intervention in Complex Emergencies. *The Lancet*. Supplement on Conflict and Health.

Describing such youths as 'traumatised' acknowledges the symptoms they are experiencing, but potentially directs attention to too narrow a set of the issues they face. Material circumstances, social relationships, culture and religious values all potentially impact psychosocial well-being. It is not only a concern for understanding the wider context in which children experience distress that cautions against use of the PTSD framework. For example, there is some indication that promoting such a 'western' framework for understanding suffering can displace indigenous ways of understanding the impact of events on individuals, which may form the basis of useful interventions.

Some agencies planning trauma-based interventions in Angola had little understanding of local cultural patterns of coping, such as *conselho*, which involves demonstration of solidarity and practical support alongside encouragement to see suffering in a wider context. The interventions that were thus recommended were based upon an analysis of an assumed ‘incapacity’ to deal with the events of war, and included strategies such as counselling and psychoeducation.

Source: Eyber, C & Ager, A (2002) *Conselho: Trauma and healing in Angola. The Lancet.*

Also, there is increasing evidence that in some circumstances there may actually be little relationship between reporting PTSD-type symptoms and children’s capacity to meaningfully engage in activities. In this case, focusing interventions on relief of these symptoms makes little sense.

Within the debate about the impact of trauma and stress, there are nevertheless a number of issues on which most authorities agree. A number of children will experience mental health problems in the context of unstable situations. While the proportion of children likely to experience such problems is debated, there is clear evidence that the more severe the events experienced, the greater likelihood there is of problems. The few children identified as suffering serious effects associated with trauma may benefit from professional help. If you are unsure if a person is suffering psychiatric problems, referral to a medical specialist is recommended if available.

Some ways of measuring the social and emotional needs of children is frequently valuable in advocating for attention to such issues within unstable situations. The PTSD framework – used alongside other appropriate measures – can be useful in this regard, and need not lead to the implementation of interventions based upon the ‘trauma’ model.

Whatever framework is used to understand the experience of children involved in these events, there is general agreement that psychosocial programs need to relate to the culture and values of that child and be implemented as soon as possible.

While this principle is almost universally asserted, in practice the 'integration' of western and local, traditional understandings and methods is complex, with western practices often displacing local practices. An approach such as reflected by the PTSD framework is so firmly rooted in western understandings of well-being that truly reflecting local cultural values is very difficult. Therefore, while acknowledging that there may be some value in certain ways of thinking of children's needs and supporting their development that have their origin in the West, a framework which more readily relates to non-western understandings of children's well-being is generally advocated.

Children and their needs

Child development is the process of growth and maturation of the human individual from conception to adulthood. Understanding the needs of a child at various stages of growth and development is of critical importance for providing appropriate and effective support. Recognising the stages of child development is at the basis of ensuring that a child's best interests are identified and addressed, particularly in difficult situations. UNICEF follows a developmental model in that it recognises that children at various ages have different needs and problems and that programs must vary accordingly.

The impact of disaster is not the same for all children. Effects vary according to age, gender, culture, and social and emotional supports. Age in particular affects the way in which children understand and respond to what is happening to them.

Stages in Child Growth and Development

Child growth and development is best understood within a cultural context, but nonetheless, can be categorised into three broad stages: early childhood - birth to approximately five or six years; middle childhood - approximately six to twelve years; and adolescence (or late childhood and early adulthood) - approximately twelve to eighteen years.

Early childhood

Babies are dependent on adults for all their needs. This dependence is a major feature of the first five years of life.

Young children need adults to provide food and shelter, to protect them, and make them feel safe. They are also highly reliant on adults to provide the experiences that stimulate the development of their language and thinking. The stressful events that accompany disaster may threaten or disrupt the emotional or intellectual development of children. Children are likely to be emotionally affected by stressful events and may have difficulty in understanding what is happening.

The impact of stressful events may be seen in children's behaviour and reflected in their play. Young children may become aggressive, withdraw, or seek closer contact with their mothers or other significant caregivers. They may also respond more fearfully to loud noises, the strong emotions of others, or being left alone. It is through play that children build their understandings of the world. Therefore, the play that follows stressful events is likely to provide children with the opportunity to explore what is happening to them.

Middle childhood

From six to twelve years of age, children continue to develop rapidly in their abilities to think and understand, to be aware of and manage their feelings, and to do things for themselves. This provides them with ever increasing ways of understanding and dealing with stressful events. However, in some circumstances, children may find themselves with little control over events. To counteract this, children may employ fantasy play in which they can determine events and outcomes for themselves. At this stage in their lives, young children may have a heightened awareness of their own vulnerability and may be more fearful than their younger siblings.

Adolescence (late childhood and early adulthood)

Adolescence is not a universally recognised concept, for in some cultures the time between childhood and adulthood may be very short. Nonetheless, young people do undergo significant physical and emotional changes between the ages

of twelve and eighteen years. Brought on by the hormonal changes of puberty, adolescents experience changes to body shape and the rapid development of their own sexuality. At this time too, adolescents in many cultures are separating from their parents and establishing their own relationships with the world outside of the family. It is during this period that young people achieve intellectual maturity. They are now likely to have acquired a realistic understanding of the stressful events they have experienced or continue to experience.

In times of instability, the absence of adult role models and disruption in social settings may sometimes have an impact on children's moral development and practice. They may be more vulnerable than their younger siblings for they no longer employ fantasy to cope with their circumstances. It has also been noted that, in refugee contexts younger children are more likely to receive program support than adolescents, because the younger children are a more visible group.

Adolescents in unstable and insecure environments are at particular risk because of the level of maturity they have attained. It is important to recognise the need for specific protection measures for this age group, in order to address such abuses as underage military recruitment, sexual exploitation, and involvement in harmful child labour practices.

The strongest supports for adolescents are most often their peers. Adolescents are also likely to expand the number and significance of relationships with adults outside of the family.

Child development and cultural variations

Like adolescence, childhood is as much determined by cultural beliefs, concepts and practices, as it is by biological factors. Knowledge about child development must include factors such as culture, history, customs, religious rituals, and family and community patterns of social behaviour. These cultural

factors have a significant impact upon children's development and it is essential that programs for children take these factors into account. However, taking cultural factors into account may present dilemmas as can be seen in the following story.

In a refugee camp in Southern Africa, a dispute broke out between local camp authorities and refugee leaders over the fate of a 13-year-old Mozambican refugee girl. As a separated minor, she had been placed in the care of a foster family from her province of origin. When a refugee worker learned that the girl had been promised (against her will) as a second wife to an older Mozambican refugee man, the worker went to the camp authorities in protest. The camp authorities stated that the marriage would be against the law of the host country and would also change the status of the girl as a separated minor, searching for her family.

In contrast, the camp's refugee leaders noted that the girl carried adult responsibilities in her foster home, that she was considered an adult, and that it was customary practice for a girl her age and status to marry in her home district. They felt that the camp authorities were intruding on their culture and traditions, and undermining their role in the community.

The situation was finally resolved when a Mozambican traditional healer stated that marriage could not take place because the foster family was not entitled to collect the bride price that had already been promised. The girl was placed with a different foster family, and her situation was monitored by a women's association in the camp.

It is of note that while the girl's wishes became known, they remained, along with an assessment of her long-term best interests, quite secondary to the major points of contention and debate.

The Refugee Experience (2001): Understanding the psychosocial needs of refugee children and adolescents

Gender Differences

Wars, famines and other unstable situations affect men, women, boys and girls differently, because they have different roles in society. Gender roles are the socially constructed differences between males and females. Gender is also shaped by social, economic and cultural forces, and so varies between cultures and social groups. Gender differences are manifested in a number of ways such as gender roles, and social and cultural practices.

In some contexts, being a boy, or a girl, may be more significant than the fact of being a child. Different societies have contrasting ideas about both children's vulnerabilities and their capacities, about how they best learn, about what is good for them and what is bad for them. Within a given context, childhood is often highly differentiated to social caste or class, as well as gender.

In some contexts, girls are much less likely to have opportunities to attend school or take part in other social activities. They may face problems of gender discrimination throughout their life cycle, special risks, and pressures to conform to roles that limit their opportunities and constrain their life choices in particular ways not faced by boys. For this reason, mitigating gender discrimination and helping girls overcome barriers to their full development is a central focus of programming for adolescents.

It is important to realise that boys, as well as girls, have gender roles to live up to. Boys are under pressure from peers, their families and the community to perform according to gender roles that relate to masculinity. It may, in fact, be harder for boys to carry out traditional roles in emergency situations because their roles could be related to agriculture or other work that might not be able to be pursued in these circumstances.

Boys are at particular risk of disengagement from the education system, juvenile delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, road accidents, and other problems. Psychosocial programs are needed to help boys avoid these dangers and the risky sexual behaviours that can lead to HIV/AIDS and other STDs, teenage pregnancies and violence against women and girls. Such programs help boys behave responsibly towards themselves and towards girls and women.

HIV/AIDS prevention among young people

An analysis of surveys conducted among young people over recent years for UNICEF's 'The Progress of Nations Report 2000' showed a dangerous lack of knowledge among young people about how to protect themselves from AIDS. In all 17 countries surveyed, girls knew less than boys. This knowledge gap was considered an important insight in the understanding of higher levels of HIV-infection among girls in many countries. It also highlighted a means by which prevention efforts could be improved. The study concluded that experience in the field showed, that the chances for behavioural change improved when information campaigns addressing underlying attitudes, values and skills needed for protection were conducted with young people themselves actively participating in the design and implementation of the campaign.

Adapted from: UNICEF, (2000) The Progress of Nations 2000 – My Song against AIDS.

The Role of the Family and Primary Caregivers

Families are the basic unit of society, and the well-being of children is closely linked to that of their parents. In all societies, families try to protect and meet the basic needs of children. However, understandings of what constitutes the family vary from setting to setting.

In some places, the family can be defined as the child's immediate relatives; parents, brothers and sisters. In other places, there may be a far wider extended family including grandparents, aunts and uncles and more distant relations within a clan, village or community. Again, there will be pronounced cultural variations.

Whatever the structure, in most cases, families provide the best environment for meeting the needs of children, and attachment to caregivers is one of the fundamental building blocks of child development.

In addition to providing care and protection, the family is where children learn how to behave with other people, where they learn about their family history, and the language, culture, and customs of their community. However, parents' or other caregivers' stress is likely to affect children. If children feel that their families are able to protect them and provide for their emotional and physical needs, their level of distress is likely to be reduced. Clearly, a most important aim of all programs should be to strengthen the capacity of families to nurture and support their children.

Preserving family unity helps to minimise the effects of catastrophic events on children. However separations do occur, particularly in situations of large population displacements, and it is therefore essential that activities to limit separations, as well as identify children who have been

separated, are in place and functioning as quickly as possible. The sooner that separated children are identified the greater the chance of successful reunification.

It is therefore in the best interests of the child that wherever possible, children are provided with care within a family setting. Where children have experienced multiple carers, distress will be minimised if they are able to maintain contact with at least one of their previous caregivers. It is especially important that brothers and sisters be kept together whenever possible. Care within a supported child-headed family may be preferable to separation from siblings.

The Role of the Local Context

One of the aims of psychosocial programming is to construct activities that draw upon, and are consistent with, local culture. The well-being of both children and their caregivers is linked to the availability of supportive structures within the local community; knowledge of local culture and resources is important.

In unstable situations important supportive community structures may be increasingly hard to maintain. This increases the potential threat to children's development, and may lead children to face an accumulation of risks. Therefore, activities which: help restore previous social structures; facilitate the setting-up of new and adaptive structures; and strengthen the capacity of existing social networks are most likely to impact positively on children's development.

Situations of armed conflict, especially those involving flight and displacement, are enormously disruptive to children's lives. These situations create massive changes that frequently involve significant losses, and seriously alter the child's life course and sense of purpose and direction. Displacement undermines the social networks, local institutions and relationships (family, school, village/neighbourhood) that support normal

development, emotional security, children's learning and their sense of self and identity.

Local infrastructure and support systems are easily disrupted in unstable situations, threatening the well-being of children in the following ways:

- **Crowded accommodation, lack of health services, lack of clean water and adequate sanitation** pose particular threats to the health of the growing child. Inadequate immunisation programs, lack of capacity to control infectious diseases and poor health services are also likely to have considerable impact on the healthy development of children and adolescents.
- **Malnutrition** is closely linked to disease, especially infectious diseases. Under-nourished children have less resistance to disease, and once they have a diarrheal or respiratory infection, eat even less so that a cycle of disadvantage is set up which can quickly lead to death. Children's nutritional needs are significantly different from those of adults. Severe clinical malnutrition which can begin in the foetal state and continue into the first one or two years of life is associated with long-term effects on the development of the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of development as well as competence in motor functioning. Chronic malnutrition can also lead to stunted growth.
- **Chronic poor health**, often associated with malnutrition, can affect the child's natural inclination to explore and learn from the environment, school and other social activities.
- **Emotional distress** can result from loss and or disruption of routines and social support.

- **Physical injuries** can also be associated with armed conflict: for example, bomb blasts can lead not only to shock and anxiety but to hearing loss, which in turn may affect school performance. Bombs, shells, bullets and landmines can cause a wide range of physical disabilities and psychological threats.
- **Loss of educational opportunities** can have far-reaching effects on children's development. Children whose primary education is disrupted often find it difficult to return to schooling later in their childhood. Girls are particularly likely to be disadvantaged educationally. The absence of basic education violates the rights of children and often proves to be a life-long handicap.
- **Lack of opportunities for play:** although children's play takes different forms for children of different ages and genders in different cultures, play is an essential and universal feature of childhood through which children explore, learn, co-operate, cope and adjust. Through play, children not only develop skills and competencies, but also handle and re-enact difficult life experiences and express their feelings about them. In conflict and refugee situations, play may be inhibited by a number of factors, including pressures on the time of parents and other carers; the possibility of their own anxieties making them emotionally unavailable to the children; lack of spaces for play; and anxieties about security which may lead parents to restrict their children's movements.

Customary Practices and Rituals

People in different cultural contexts perceive, understand and make sense of events and experiences in different ways, based on distinct norms, beliefs and values. In this way, mental health is closely linked to culture because the ways in which people

experience, give meaning and express psychological distress are tied to specific social and cultural contexts. The beliefs that people hold to explain their distress need to feature in the design of programs to alleviate this distress. Therefore, distress is often solved at the local level using traditional healing practices.

The dominant approach to helping, employed by western NGOs, stems from modern psychology. However, western psychology is itself culturally constructed around particular views that locate the causes of and responses to distress predominantly at the level of the individual. In many non-western cultures, the dominant view is more collectivistic with quite different ideas about the individual. Hence, external programs that focus on the individual may undermine local beliefs about helping, leave people dependent on outside help, and be unsustainable in the longer term.

In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, for example, it is believed that people who have killed or witnessed killing are contaminated by the spirits of the dead. Healing rituals that cleanse both the individual and the community are important not only for the redemption of individuals, but as collective protection for the community as a whole.

In designing psychosocial activities, it is important that NGOs and other helping organizations consider non-western beliefs and approaches to mental health and well-being.

Needs of Children and Protective Factors

A 'child development' approach is taken in order to recognise the specific needs of children at different life and age stages. These stages distinguish the particular capacities and vulnerabilities that must be addressed in order to minimise risks and prevent further harm, while at the same time reinforcing the particular cultural and communal protective factors that

enhance healthy development. Children are somewhat protected from the negative effects of stressful events when their needs are met. Hence, the needs of children can also be seen as the factors that protect them.

Protection

Child protection rights include protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Effective protection begins with recognising the rights to which children are entitled. These rights should be understood and attended by those who seek to help and protect them. Successful protection increases a child's chance to grow up physically and mentally healthy, confident and self-respecting, and less likely to abuse and exploit others.

Structure and routine

Children need the structure and routine of daily life. This conveys a sense of purpose and dependability that can be a calming, stabilising element for the whole community as well as for its children. It also helps engender feelings of responsibility and respect for other people.

Sense of control

A sense of control over daily routine builds on strengths and capacities of young people. One of the immediate impacts of social emergencies and natural disasters is disruption to social institutions and daily routines. School is one such institution. Returning children to school and the routines associated with school life is important in re-establishing structure and purpose in children's lives and promoting coping and resilience.

Participation and sense of self worth

Children are not just 'innocent' and passive victims, but active citizens whose values and aspirations are connected to the community. They must be able to think of themselves as worthy and capable of achieving desired goals. Children need a sense of empowerment and of being valued. They should be able to participate in the larger community and feel in harmony

with the norms of society. Children have the capacity to form independent opinions and to participate in decisions affecting their own lives. They should be given opportunities to do so.

Relationship with caregivers

Children need to feel safe and cared for by supportive adult caregivers. Secure emotional relationships with caregivers provide children with strong protection against psychological harm. This is particularly the case when caregivers are able to maintain their caring roles during unstable times. Therefore, it is important to support and strengthen caregivers' capacity to look after their children.

Relationship with peers

All children need friends, particularly friendships with their peers. These relationships provide the best environment for the development of social skills and the enhancement of children's identity and sense of belonging.

Sense of belonging

Children need to feel socially connected to a community and feel that they are part of a larger social world. Efforts to promote community and children's participation in it will foster well-being for both the children and the community

Resilience

"Resilience" describes the characteristics of those who cope relatively well and are able to 'bounce back' after difficult or stressful experiences. As with most human abilities, there is considerable variation among people's capacities to bounce back after experiencing adverse circumstances. Children's responses to extreme events vary according to both internal and external factors. Internal factors include: intellectual maturity, self-esteem, self-control, coping style, sense of purpose, and sense of optimism. External contributors to resilience include: support of caregivers, quality of family life, degree of social support and positive role models in the community.

The important message to be gained from the concept of resilience is the idea that many children are able to cope quite well with difficult circumstances. Therefore, it should not be assumed that all children experiencing the same stressful events will be at risk of harmful effects.

Policies and Programming Principles

UNICEF Policies

The central role of UNICEF in unstable situations is the implementation of programme activities for women and children, with a particular emphasis on advocacy; assessment and coordination and care and protection of vulnerable children. The organisation is committed to providing support to children and women through mutually reinforcing actions in the areas of humanitarian policy, global advocacy and humanitarian response.

The goals of UNICEF psychosocial responses are two-fold:

- a) To promote a social environment that protects all children from exposure to situations that have harmful effects on their psychosocial well-being
- b) To contribute to ensuring the protection, recovery and reintegration of children who have been exposed to situations harmful for their psychosocial development.

UNICEF's objectives are therefore:

- To engage governments, civil society, communities, families and children to influence social environment, behaviour and attitudes in order to provide and promote a safe and protective environment.
- To raise awareness of government, civil society, communities, families and children about the psychosocial implications of armed conflict and natural disasters, other forms of violence and exploitation, as well as alternative care situations.

- To prevent and decrease negative psychosocial impact of armed conflict and natural disasters, and other forms of violence and exploitation, as well as alternative care.
- To develop, provide and strengthen psychosocial support services for children and their caregivers.

UNICEF's Core Corporate Commitments

In 1998, UNICEF convened the Martigny Global Consultation to formulate a set of recommendations to improve UNICEF responsiveness to children in unstable situations. A primary outcome was the identification of a minimum set of Core Corporate Commitments in four principal areas:

- Rapid assessment – the ability to conduct an immediate assessment of the situation of children and women in areas of crisis;
- Coordination – the capacity to assume a coordinating role for sectorial support and to initiate appropriate strategies for initial response in collaboration with United Nations and other partners;
- Programme commitments – policy and programme guidance in the required interventions to assist field staff in designing and implementing responses to the assessed situation of children and women, in cooperation with national counterparts and international partners;
- Operational commitments – organisational capacity, procedures and resources to ensure that the appropriate programmatic response will be available in a timely basis.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework for understanding protection and psychosocial well-being. Built on varied legal systems and cultural traditions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere are entitled to, without discrimination.

Children have the right:

- To survival;
- To develop to the fullest;
- To protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and
- To participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education and legal, civil and social services. These standards are benchmarks against which progress can be assessed. States that are party to the Convention are obliged to develop and undertake all actions and policies in the light of the best interests of the child.

Since the 1990s, following adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF has become an essential actor in the field of human rights, incorporating the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of other human rights treaties into its programs. The articles in the Convention address a number of issues that work at a level to protect children in different emergency situations. However, the guiding principles of *non-discrimination*, the *best interests of the*

child, survival and development, participation of children and the *right to psychological recovery* are taken to be fundamental rights for providing protection and frame UNICEF's approach to promoting psychosocial well-being.

Article 2: Non-discrimination

Article 2 means that no child should be injured, privileged or punished by or deprived of, any right on the ground of his or her race, colour or gender; on the basis of his or her language or religion, or national social or ethnic origin; on the grounds of any political or other opinion.

Article 3: Best Interests of the Child

Article 3 of the CRC requires governments and non-government organisations to consider the impact on children of their actions and to ensure that all of their actions are in the best interests of children.

Article 6: Survival and Development

This article addresses the child's right to life, survival and development. It is not limited to a physical perspective; rather, it further emphasises the need to ensure full and harmonious development of the child, including spiritual, moral and social dimensions.

Article 12: Participation

Several provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child reflect children's right to participation. The principle underlines children's status as individuals with fundamental human rights and with views and feelings of their own. The significance of this article is that it not only requires that children should be assured the right to express their views freely, but also that they should be heard and that their views be given 'due weight'. The Convention envisages a changed relationship between adults and children. Parents, teachers, caregivers and others interacting with children are seen no longer as mere providers, protectors or advocates, but also as negotiators and facilitators. Adults are therefore expected to create spaces and

promote processes designed to enable and empower children to express views, to be consulted and to influence decisions. The child therefore has the right to participate in the decision-making process affecting his or her life.

**Article 39:
Right to psychological recovery**

This article recognises the child's right to psychological recovery, and social reintegration of the child victim. The psychosocial care and protection of children affected by armed conflict and displacement are extremely important components of humanitarian action.

Consistent with the CRC, many international and national governmental and nongovernmental organizations now consider the psychological and social aspects of humanitarian assistance to children and their families as necessary components in responding to the overall developmental needs of children in unstable situations. This has led to an emphasis on providing activities for children to create a safe and normal environment (rather than 'treatment'). UNICEF's policy has developed similarly, towards the need to build an environment conducive to the child's recovery and reintegration.

The CRC has provided a framework within which the impact of particular circumstances on the child's evolving capacities can be assessed, and has enabled increasing attention to be paid to contextual factors such as the age and stage of development of the children, and, in particular, an appreciation of the social and cultural aspects of childhood.

Programming principles

Knowledge of: children's rights; child development within cultural contexts; the needs of children; the factors that protect children; and stresses for children associated with unstable situations; as well relevant UNICEF policy provide the context for the following psychosocial programming principles:

Human Rights – All programs of assistance to children in unstable situations must be designed and carried out in a way that promotes respect for their human rights as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The overall objective of psychosocial programs is to re-establish a state of wellbeing that is necessary for and promotes the healthy development of children and their caregivers.

Non-discrimination – Psychosocial programs should be provided to all children without discrimination of any kind, giving particular attention to the needs of girls and children of especially disadvantaged, oppressed or persecuted groups. Children should not be stigmatised for being associated with trauma, violence, soldiering, rape or other such circumstances.

Best Interest of the Child – In all decisions affecting the psychological and social wellbeing of the child, primary consideration should be given to the child's development. Psychosocial programs and their outcomes should not be used for any purpose other than the psychosocial development of the beneficiary. In particular, such activities should not be used for political, media, economic, social or personal gain for the implementing organisation or individual. The long-term development of the individual and the potentially harmful consequences of any short-term activities should be taken into account when implementing programs.

Gender – Psychosocial programs should take gender dimensions into account.

Values and Culture – Psychosocial programs should be based on a situational assessment that includes information about the culture and values of the community into which the child is being reintegrated and allow the expression and observance of the child’s own culture.

Child Participation – Children should participate in all programs that are designed to foster their wellbeing. Participation includes the right to join together in groups, to express their own opinions and views, to make decisions and to have access to information and knowledge that is appropriate to their psychological recovery and social reintegration. Actions to ensure participation can support short-term coping while encouraging resilient, long-term and developmental outcomes. By incorporating their participation in defining strategies for action, a reality is made of the CRC to take ‘due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child’.

Family and Community-oriented Approach – All program activities should promote the cohesion of family and community in the process of addressing the child’s psychosocial needs. The participation of the family and community will contribute to the long-term recovery of the children and help to prevent further violations of children’s rights. Where possible, children without families should be provided a family-like environment.

Well-being and Prevention – The overall objective of psychosocial programs is to re-establish a state of well-being that is necessary for healthy development of children. These programs should be implemented in a way that also contributes to protecting children from further harm. This includes public education about the psychological and social effects of violence on children and training caregivers, including parents, to recognise these effects on children.

An Integrated Approach – Programs for children in unstable situations should promote human rights and reconciliation, as well as fostering psychosocial wellbeing. An integrated approach to psychosocial work is recommended where programs are integrated with education, healthcare and other helping services. In a holistic approach all of the UNICEF sectors including: education, health, advocacy, protection and community building are essential in promoting the psychosocial well-being of children.

Focus on Resources of Beneficiaries – Activities should be carried out with the participation of members of the affected community, recognizing the resources that community members bring to the situation. The emphasis should be on these people as survivors, rather than victims. Therefore the focus should be on identifying their strengths and capacities rather than their problems.

Capacity-building with Partner Organisations – Successful psychosocial programs not only directly intervene to foster the psychological and social well-being of people affected by complex emergencies, but they also develop the capacities of partner organisations to conduct this work on their own. These partners may include: international and national NGOs; central, district or provincial government officials; local professionals and para-professionals; and community leaders including elders, healers, and heads of community associations.

Monitoring and Evaluation Built into Programs –

To ensure that programs are successful, not only in the short-term, but that they endure and address long-term needs, appropriate monitoring and evaluation procedures need to be built in at the beginning. These procedures should be culturally appropriate and based on community participation and ownership.

Ethical Standards – All psychosocial activities need to reflect the highest ethical standards.

Addressing the Needs of Children, their Families and Communities

Given UNICEF's policy and approach to psychosocial work and the common programming principles outlined above, the organisation works in the following areas to address the needs of children, their families and communities:

Family and Caregiver Support

One of the most basic psychosocial activities is to support and foster the connection that exists between the wellbeing of caregivers and that of their children. Children of all ages are strongly affected by the stress levels and situations of their adult caregivers. Once children have lost the protection of their families or if their families are seriously weakened, they are vulnerable to a range of chronic secondary problems. Beyond reaching individual children, the emphasis of psychosocial programs should be on strengthening children's social supports, mainly the family and the community.

Family and caregiver support involves empowering families, protecting family unity, and nurturing responsibility and self-help. It also involves assisting families, where appropriate, with knowledge about child rearing and family problem-solving strategies. Other activities that support the family include: awareness raising about psychosocial well-being; empowerment of women; family responsibility activities for fathers and other caregivers.

Helping the adults in the family to re-build a sense of effectiveness as parents is an important contribution to improving children's well-being. Very often, parental capacity is

affected by parents' reactions to stressful events which, when compounded by the additional burdens that may be placed upon them, especially in refugee contexts, may limit their responsiveness to their children.

A wide range of approaches can have an impact on the well-being of parents and other caregivers. These include the provision of appropriate and accessible health services, economic activities, educational opportunities, and cultural and recreational activities. Some programs specifically aim at enhancing parental competence and offer courses in home craft and parenting education. Others attempt more generally to improve the quality of life and opportunities for the development of men and women.

Strengthening the role of parents – especially mothers

- Ask the mothers what kind of support they want
- Guarantee the security and safety of single mothers by an organised protection system within camps or refugee communities
- Include mothers in activities and groups dealing with mother's issues
- Establish a women's interest group to explore further possibilities
- Involve women in committees
- Create a mother-child group for discussion and stimulation for smaller children
- Form a women's support network, visiting mothers who are depressed or worried

Segerstrom, E (1995): Focus on Refugee Children – A Handbook for Training Field Refugee Workers in Social and Community Work. Radda Barnen: Stockholm

It is also important to encourage and support fathers in their parenting roles.

Strengthening the family and community's ability to care for their children

Many young parents feel overwhelmed or otherwise vulnerable, therefore training in skills of positive parenting is just as important as pre and post-natal care. Building confidence in the skills required to be a positive parent, including basic information on healthcare, education and conflict resolution, could begin in a non-formal school setting through a comprehensive program aimed at youth as well as new parents (for example, in Child-Friendly spaces).

IRC and UNICEF (2002) East Timor Assessment of the Situation of Separated Children and Orphans in East Timor

Primary caregivers can be overwhelmed by the demands of a complex emergency and when this happens their capacity to care for their children is affected. The local community can be helped to provide social support for caregivers in these circumstances. In mobilising support, consider the following:

- If parents or primary caregivers are not available, find another caregiver who can take responsibility for unaccompanied children. This person needs to be supported to provide emotional warmth, stability and consistent care
- Use consistent, predictable daily routines in order to provide children with a sense of order and security
- Organise familiar activities for children such as play, school, participation in household chores
- Make sure children know what is happening. Tell them what is going on and what to expect.

Protection

The protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect means working to stop violations of the children's right to protection and to meet children's survival and development needs. Beyond this, it also means building an environment in which human rights are respected and children can play, learn and develop as normally as possible.

Steps towards children's protection include:

- Action to secure and ensure physical safety
- Action to prevent ongoing violations of human rights
- The provision of food, shelter and medical assistance
- Action to help restore the well-being of children and their families
- Action to strengthen communities and local and national institutions.
- Action to restore children's dignity subsequent to a pattern of abuse (through rehabilitation, restitution, compensation and reparation).

Children are particularly vulnerable to separation during large population movements associated with unstable situations. To reduce the likelihood of separation:

- Tell families about ways of keeping together, such as, using name tags, attaching string to children's clothing, teaching their children to tell people their names and addresses, and ensuring that families devise plans to seek to re-unite if members become separated
- Identify places where children are most likely to become separated from their carers such as border crossings, check-points and transit sites, and provide help at these locations
- Identify particular children who are at risk of separation, for example, child-headed households, children with disabilities, or those with sick or injured carers, and focus attention on them.

Many countries report increases in the number of children living with one parent or in unstable arrangements as a result of economic hardships, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, divorce and abandonment. Children deprived of a family environment have the right to special protection, assistance and alternative care. Placing children in institutions should be avoided and done only if other safe and viable places are not available. In the past, too many children were institutionalised unnecessarily. Sometimes this was due to poverty, because parents felt that it was the only way to ensure that their children would be fed, clothed and sheltered. At other times, parents felt unable to deal with their child's disability or had to relinquish the child due to social stigma. This underscores the importance of providing families in difficult circumstances with the support they need to shoulder their responsibilities, an approach that both respects the child's right to a family environment and is more cost-effective.

Family Tracing and Reunification

Family tracing and re-unification are priorities in emergency situations because re-uniting families provides the best chance for the well-being of children. If children are separated from their families, programs need to be provided to develop the children's inner resources to cope with the separation.

The common practice of creating residential centres for unaccompanied children is now questioned. Often these centres lack the staff and resources to provide the kind of care children need under very difficult circumstances. Such centres often develop many of the negative characteristics of long-term institutions. It has been argued that poor institutional care can do more damage to children than the emergency that created the need for care in the first place.

Separated children: an example of good practice

During the mass returns to Rwanda in late 1996, 10,000 unaccompanied minors were identified: over 75% of these were promptly reunited, due largely to a strategy of returning the minors directly to their communities of origin rather than placing them in temporary centres. Key factors to success were well-organised documentation, registration, parent registration, photo-tracing and cross-border and inter-agency co-operation.

The Refugee Experience (2001): Understanding the psychosocial needs of refugee children

Economic Security

Psychosocial well-being and the ability to satisfy material needs are inter-related. People in communities in unstable situations, whether in the emergency, reconstruction or development phases, need to be able to earn money or goods. This is not only to acquire the basics needed for survival, but is also related to pride and self-esteem. People who are able to be productive and not totally dependent on others feel good about themselves and this has a direct impact on their children. On the other hand, previously independent adults who are thrust into a state of dependency often become depressed and less responsive to the needs of their children.

The need to be productive affects older children and adolescents as well. They will want to be able to contribute to the family and may feel a sense of frustration at not being able to help. Therefore programs that attempt to provide economic activity for adults should consider the older children and adolescents as well.

Widows and widower programs

Lack of resources, and not just confidence and capacity, drive a single parent to give up their child to a centre. The development of programs that provide widows with access to resources and alternative child care support (eg, day care centres, child-friendly spaces) are essential. Several initiatives have used micro-enterprise projects to support the household. Such local initiatives keep these children connected to home communities

IRC and UNICEF (2001) Assessment of the Situation of Separated Children and Orphans in East Timor

Income generation programs for women

The Rwandan Women's Initiative (RWI) provide funds for micro-credit and training for women working to rebuild their lives. Women in Rwanda are starting brick-making businesses, producing and selling mushrooms, and training each other in sewing and embroidery. The challenge with these types of projects is to avoid the most marginal economic activities, such as handicrafts, for which there may not be a sustainable market.

The Refugee Experience (2001): Gender and forced migration,

Education and Skills Development

Education's goal is to support all children to fulfil their right to education, meet their basic learning needs, realise their full potential, and participate meaningfully in society. UNICEF recognises that education (especially schooling) is both fundamental to reconstruction and a key factor for re-establishing a sense of normalcy in situations of crisis.

The re-establishment or maintenance of formal and non-formal education opportunities is of particular psychosocial importance. School is a major source of intellectual and psychosocial development, and as such can contribute to psychosocial wellness. Children not only expand their

cognitive capacities, but they also learn about sharing, following rules, controlling impulses, and becoming social beings. School offers structure and predictability, which contribute to a child's feeling of safety and emotional security. Education responses should be timely and sensitive to the particular needs of children affected by crisis, but also strategically aligned with the longer term educational needs of the children. Education reconstruction offers important opportunities for redressing gender and other social inequities and transforming the education system and the society it serves.

Education in unstable situations

Maintaining education for school-aged children in unstable situations is increasingly recognised as the fourth pillar of humanitarian assistance alongside food, shelter and healthcare. Setting up classrooms and lessons is often one of the first things refugee populations choose to do. In Guinea for example, teachers among the refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone developed a curriculum and enrolled 12.000 students in a 'school' without any outside assistance.

UNICEF has developed the 'school-in-a-box' in order to help in the speedy establishment of schools. The box contains essential teaching equipment and learning materials, as well as training materials for people taking up the role of teacher in unstable situations.

Key principles

There are a number of key principles that need to be considered when developing education programs.

These include:

Age distinctions - Adolescents must be brought into the process as early as possible.

“Second chance” or “**drop-in**” education for adolescents should be a component of education in emergencies.

Gender must be considered a key component

Teachers and **teacher training** are especially important in relation to emergency situations.

If **vocational skills** are considered as part of education in emergencies, particular attention must be paid to output and likely opportunities.

UNHCR/UNESCO/UNICEF (1995) Education in Emergencies and for Reconstruction, Principles of Cooperation.

An example of an education program by UNICEF in Sierra Leone

Specialised school programs are supported by UNICEF. The CEIP program operates through NGO partners throughout the country; 1856 ex-combatants are registered in 304 schools. The program facilitates an ex-combatant's reintegration to school by assisting the child's community school. UNICEF supports the child's school needs while the school waives the school fee. In return, UNICEF provides the school with either student or teacher materials or recreational equipment.

UNICEF (2002): Lessons learned in psychosocial programs world-wide

Gender

Very often gender roles require girls to undertake home duties during school hours, such as looking after younger siblings, fetching firewood or water, and boys to care for animals. This also limits any time they have for homework. Planned educational activities must take this into account and address related issues through, adult education, the curricular content and processes, and providing a safe learning environment that is gender-sensitive and gender-friendly, and safe for all children.

Burkina Faso

Community mobilization and development efforts have helped to achieve a 50/50 enrolment ratio between girls and boys in schools located in the project zones. One such effort is the BISONGO, a child care centre, located next to the school, where girls drop off their younger siblings making it possible for them to attend school.

www.unicefusa.org/girls_education/global.html

Training the teachers

Teachers can be very effective in helping distressed children, provided there is no conflict between the ethnic or political background of the teacher and children. Teachers are generally interested in improving their skills to deal with psychosocial difficulties of children. Teacher-training should focus on:

- Recognising that teachers may have also been affected by the emergency and will need to be supported.
- Understanding the nature, causes and effects of stress and how this appears in the behaviour of children.
- How to organise classroom and recreational activities – to create a safe environment and avoid further stressful events in the classroom.
- When and how to use media such as writing, drawing, storytelling, dance or drama to assist children to express feelings and integrate past events.
- How to identify and enlist support and help of other adults who come into contact with children in need, such as parents, community workers, health workers, religious teachers or traditional healers.
- How to prepare a plan of action for those children who are severely affected by events and will require special individualised or small group help.
- Recognition of the importance that peers offer children.

Given the importance of formal education in Sri Lanka, enrolling displaced and returnee children in classes is a high priority for IDP families. UNICEF Sri Lanka has recognised that many of these re-enrolled students are still deeply affected by the conflict, and that teachers are in a unique position to observe students facing adjustment difficulties. UNICEF has initiated training programs for primary school teachers to help recognise signs of psychosocial needs in IDP children, and to build appropriate interventions or referrals.

Nylund, Legrand, & Holtsberg, (1999): The role of art in psychosocial care and protection for displaced children. Forced Migration Review No.6

The curriculum

The content, or curriculum should, as much as possible, be modelled on the curriculum the children would have studied in their local schools had the emergency not occurred. However, it is important to recognise that the children might have great difficulty concentrating because of their immediate circumstances. Therefore, it is important to adapt the curriculum to include topics that deal specifically with the emergency. These may include peace education, conflict resolution, human rights awareness, health issues and environmental awareness.

Class activities could also include opportunities for drawing, constructing, story-telling and role-playing about the emergency. In these ways, an outlet can be provided for children to express their thoughts and feelings about their situations.

Child Rights Education

The Canadian National Committee for UNICEF has played a leading role promoting education about children's rights throughout the country. 'In Our Own Backyard' (Biggs, 1995), is a teaching guide for grades 1-8 that demonstrates how rights education can be integrated into the curriculum through the use of arts and literature and other subjects. It suggests activities under rights categories such as mental and physical well-being, identity and expression, family and community, knowledge and culture, and law and protection. Children may draw a time line of diseases and other health hazards that can affect them from birth to age 18, noting steps that can be taken to prevent them. They may role-play dangerous situations, such as peer pressure to buy drugs, and discuss responses and solutions. Or they may interview classmates and parents about how they define their identity. The Committee has also supported the publication of a book of poetry on children's rights (Fitch, 1997)—a popular way for parents and children to open discussion of rights issues together.

UNICEF (1999): Peace Education in UNICEF

Event-specific curriculum

Very often the fear and anxiety associated with social emergencies or natural disasters is related to a lack of information about events and how to cope with them. Information from a known and trusted source about the experiences people usually have after stressful events will help in increasing the sense of control, and reduce the anxiety the survivors feel after the event.

This information can be presented through short booklets, brochures, flyers, or in the classroom, so that many people can find an opportunity to access it in a structured atmosphere. The contents of these brochures or seminars generally include information regarding the stressful event, information about the

normal reactions experienced afterwards, information about other accompanying symptoms, and advice on how to cope with emotions and the feeling of grief itself. People are also informed about the signs that should be watched for and must be referred to professionals. It is important to point out that teachers and other education personnel need to be trained in the awareness of these factors.

Think globally, act locally

In 1996, U.S. Fund for UNICEF developed curriculum material called 'Kids Helping Kids'. The curriculum consisted of activities and resources for teaching peace designed to help guide children towards a better understanding of the causes of conflicts and how to resolve them peacefully. These materials, and others, were used in classrooms, after September 11th and during the war in Afghanistan, to help children address the effects of these events on their lives and the lives of their family and friends.

In a letter to teachers, the following promotion invited teachers to make use of the curriculum as one means by which they could 'think globally and act locally':

'By building children's self-esteem, communication skills, and respect for others, you can increase the peace in your community. By teaming up with U.S. Fund for UNICEF, you can make a real difference in the world. This teacher's guide contains activities that can help you achieve these goals with students in grades 1–9. At the same time, children will be developing language-arts, problem-solving, and leadership skills. Get your colleagues involved and make this a school-wide effort.'

Adapted from: <http://www.unicefusa.org/issues96/sep96/guide/english.html>

Vocational Training

For many children, vocational training may be a better alternative to schooling when their education has been disrupted by conflict. Schooling is often harder for older children, so there is a need to consider: literacy and training courses, traditional apprenticeship schemes, vocational training, opportunities for self-employment.

Separating boys from the military: an example of good practice

In Goma (former Zaire), implementing partner Action, Youth and the Environment (AYE) initiated a successful program for separating from the military hundreds of unaccompanied Rwandan boys acting as servants and mascots.

A crucial element of the program's success was a rehabilitation program that provided the boys with constructive alternatives for their lives and taught them independent living skills, leadership training, involvement in vocational and community service projects and ways to resolve individual and group differences. Boys lived and worked together, built their own shelters and did their own cooking and domestic chores. Family tracing was vital to achieving family reunification and facilitating eventual repatriation.

This program evolved into a broader adolescent initiative that engaged thousands of teenage girls and boys. One of their projects was an investigation of the sexual exploitation of adolescent girls in the refugee camp, a report of which was presented by UNHCR at the 1996 World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation of Children

The Refugee Experience (2001): Understanding the psychosocial needs of refugee children and adolescents

Skills training is important not just in providing adolescents with the means to earn an income but also in providing them with a sense of purpose and self-worth. This, along with the increased economic independence that stems from vocational training, contributes greatly to their psychological and social well-being.

Albania UNICEF is working alongside the private sector in the development of Youth Albania Parcel Services (YAPS), a program employing disadvantaged youth. The benefits of this program are seen as going beyond the income the youth earn. Most importantly the program assists the youth to build up their self-esteem and confidence.

Engaging activities

Structured activities, including play and recreation, are especially important for children of all ages. Structure in daily life conveys a sense of purpose and dependability that can be a calming, stabilising element for the whole community as well as for its children. It also helps engender feelings of responsibility and respect for other people. Activities should be responsive to the needs, concerns and resources of the population and might include some of the following:

- **Organised play and safe spaces for free play.** Play provides children with opportunities to explore and learn, to develop skills and to have fun. Through play, with its opportunities for repetition, children develop physical skills at the level of the whole body - such as climbing or hopping - and at the level of fine movements - such as threading and drawing. They also learn important social skills necessary for successful relationships with one another. Thinking and language are also developed through play. Child-friendly spaces can also provide protection in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.
- **Sports activities.** Appropriate sports activities for girls and boys provide an opportunity for releasing energy and reducing stress. Through sport activities, children can increase their feelings of control, strengthen their self-confidence, and develop respectful relationships. With very little help, children can organise sport and other team games for themselves. All they need is some space and the minimum of equipment. A soccer or volley ball can provide great opportunities for fun and recreation.

- **Music, songs, dance.** Traditional games, songs, and dances can provide a sense of stability in times of emergency. They can help maintain a sense of community and strengthen identity. Joining in such activities promotes social skills that contribute to well-being. However, it should be noted that activities that promote cultural identity can also contribute to political tensions. It is therefore important to be aware of this possibility, and if necessary, build in activities to promote tolerance of different groups.
- **Theatre, story-telling, poetry and familiar festivals - drama and puppet workshops.** In these activities, children have the opportunity to express their emotions and creativity and to learn cooperation. Puppets have many advantages because they provide a form of expression for illiterate children and those with poor writing and reading skills. Puppets also give children the opportunity to act out their concerns and to project their feelings through the puppets. Children can be provided with ready-made puppets, but they can also be given the materials to make their own.
- **Promoting traditional knowledge and skills.** Providing children with opportunities to develop traditional knowledge and to learn traditional skills is an excellent way of strengthening links across generations and ensuring continuity. These activities value culture and elders.
- **Art and cultural activities.** Art and cultural activities, such as painting, drawing, reading, story-telling, learning music, and watching films help reduce psychological stress by providing creative outlets for internal concerns, opportunities for building positive relationships and promoting self-esteem.
- **Creative writing.** Creative writing enables children to express their thoughts and emotions.

- **Internet access.** Where available, with these resources children will be able to connect to the outside world, via the internet and email. This will enable them to correspond with friends and pen-pals around the world about things beyond their own difficult circumstances. These activities help reduce feelings of informational and social isolation, and provide access to educational activities not available in schools.
- **Games.** An agency working in Khartoum, Sudan (WarChild), has initiated a chess program. Many children have shown an active interest in learning to play chess. Chess teachers were working in different locations with approximately 250 children who have all learned to play chess. New children join this group every week.
- **Youth exchange/outreach.** Exchange and outreach programs can provide children with opportunities to meet and interact with other children of other communities while giving them a chance to temporarily leave the stressful environments in which they live. Specific activities could include summer camp programs, cultural visits and field trips to neighbouring communities, student exchange programs, and internet exchange.

Age-appropriate activities:

It is important that the activities that are organised for children be age-appropriate. That is, they should match the developmental needs of the children and be the kinds of activities that children of a particular age group would be undertaking in their own culture.

Early childhood activities

- Play activities using local toys and household implements to stimulate children and allow for exploration, socialisation activities with mother/fathers or other caretakers and other children
- Story telling, poems, songs, dance and music games
- Creative art activities such as drawing, painting, pasting
- Movement activities and games with balls.

Middle childhood activities

- Play activities with local toys and materials for children to make toys
- Team sports and games with balls, skipping ropes, hoops
- Stories, drama, theatre and dance activities
- Art and craft activities.

Adolescent activities

- Games and team sports
- Art and craft activities and other hobbies
- Youth clubs and drop-in centres
- Life skills training
- HIV/AIDS education.

Creation of opportunities for the peaceful participation of Palestinian adolescents

Although a very limited number of adolescents are participating in the violence (less than 1% according to UNICEF estimates), the longer the crisis lasts and the further violence escalates, the greater the risk for adolescents to resort to violence to find a cause and fight against the injustice they acutely perceive. UNICEF has supported a range of activities with communities, media, and peers run by adolescents. These activities include: peer counselling, youth press conference, documentation by adolescents of the impact of the crisis on communities and people's lives (relying on previous UNICEF-supported training on journalism and CRC), adolescent-to-adolescent weekly TV programs, participation in internet chats, first aid training and subsequent integration of trainees in hospital-based medical teams. UNICEF is working on setting standards and quality assurance mechanisms for summer camps that are considered a key strategy to build the resilience of children through games, plays and acquisition of life skills as well as to keep them away from the violence at a time in the year when schools are closing and children are left on the streets, very close to the violence.

UNICEF (2002): Lessons learned in psychosocial programs world-wide

Community Connections

Humanitarian programs directed towards the community as a whole, and involving the beneficiaries, tend to be more successful and cost-effective in increasing the general level of children's well-being. The mobilisation of the community ensures that due recognition is given to local definitions of child development and of healing. This avoids the imposition of external, inappropriate or even detrimental healing therapies on children.

The approach of community mobilisation requires an understanding of existing and previous community structures, such as traditional or elected leadership patterns, women's organisations, youth organisations, popular movements and so on.

- **Traditional organisational structures** – Settling displaced persons in a way that re-creates, as far as possible, previous community groupings may be an extremely effective way of enabling a community to re-establish networks, leadership patterns and support structures as a way of reinforcing a sense of community, security and continuity. It may be useful to help participants to explore community structures and leadership patterns within a refugee community known to them.
- **Ensure fair representation** – In organising representation of community groups, care needs to be taken to ensure that leadership structures are representative of the community and do not support self-interest or the interests of powerful minority groups. It is also important to include women and young people in the representation.
- **Use local knowledge** – The community needs to be involved in understanding the impact of the unstable situation on their children and in determining the approaches that will benefit them. Use needs to be made of local knowledge, beliefs and practices that support children's recovery from stressful events if appropriate.

- **Including the community in children’s activities** – In addition to addressing children’s developmental and psychosocial needs, educational activities can be a forum for adolescents and adult community members to come together in a variety of ways to protect children and rebuild their community. Participation in children’s educational programs can provide opportunities for people to contribute to the community and gain a sense of belonging and self-worth. Community members may be able to offer training or educational activities for the children, help other teachers, or assist with construction or other material support. The involvement of the community will ensure that programs take into account local definitions of child development and healing.

Promoting ‘child-friendly’ spaces in East Timor

These are community-based centres where children, young people and parents can receive training, support and services. Development and learning activities are arranged for pre-school and school-aged children, as well as vocational and recreational activities. UNICEF works directly with the community to identify priority needs and to devise programs of regular activities. Priority issues may include awareness, child rights and protection, community-based outreach activities, prevention of HIV/AIDS and violence, life skills, knowledge on health, hygiene, sanitation and peace education. The programs may involve vocational training, computer and language courses, non-formal education, sports or other activities. The centres have also been used as a springboard for outreach activities for nearby communities.

UNICEF (2002): Lessons learned in psychosocial programs world-wide

Promoting youth participation

To meet the rights and needs of young people, UNICEF focused on finding ways to involve them in their immediate community life and prepare them to participate in reconstruction when the conflict ended. The six-camp project was new to UNICEF, and required flexibility, awareness of the need to protect young people from any kind of manipulation or exploitation, and sensitivity to the politicised situation.

UNICEF took a peer-to-peer approach and enlisted the help of youth volunteers from the Albanian Youth Council (AYC). UNICEF also encouraged young people to develop the Council activities on their own initiative, ensuring from the start that their voices would be heard. The Councils were encouraged to assess the problems, identify possible solutions and set priorities for action.

Early on, young people could be seen sitting in the heat under the tents, talking about their concerns and, eventually, identifying what they needed to start their first activities. These sessions helped establish trust between UNICEF, the AYC and young Kosovar refugees. Council members were introduced to camp managers, updates on the project were sent to the international agencies, and meetings arranged with women's and teachers' groups in the camps. Once this foundation was in place, young people became more confident and better organised. They became natural partners for UN agencies and NGOs involved in the crisis. And they soon were initiating a wide range of activities.

Other youth-initiated activities included holding sports tournaments (volleyball, football and badminton), organizing concerts, cleaning the camps, helping integrate new refugees, fundraising for the poorest families, setting up camp schools, disseminating information on landmines, organizing psychosocial and recreational activities for younger children, and influencing decisions taken by camp managers (e.g. asking for increased patrolling to improve security). These activities were discussed each week at meetings of the six Councils.

Black, M (2001) Growing up alone. London: UNICEF

Children's participation

In 1990 during the war in Mozambique, a UN program officer and his local counterparts initiated a documentary program in the capital of Niassa, a northern province on the border of Malawi. The project was intended to mobilise young people, augment the limited formal schooling that was available for children, and, through documentary work, increase children's appreciation of their own cultural strengths. The project involved both children and adolescents. The program's first initiative was the development of a children's newspaper. Children were supported to organise themselves into staff positions: reporters, editors and printers. With limited materials they began to study and report on their community, interviewing community leaders, artisans and the elderly. The children relied on a small, simple tape recorder and a manual typewriter. A simple silk-screen process was used for the actual printing of the papers. Papers were distributed free to children, while small businesses and adults who were able to pay were asked for small contributions. As the project evolved, a health column was included to incorporate public health messages and an 'announcements' section noted upcoming events for children and the community.

A second element of the project employed two older adolescents who began collecting and documenting traditional songs and stories from members of the community. Over time, these young people were provided with support to travel to other safe areas in the province. At a later stage, they were enabled to purchase traditional instruments, and gained access to a camcorder to document performances of traditional musicians and dancers.

The Refugee Experience (2001): Understanding the psychosocial needs of refugee children and adolescents

Advocacy and Reconciliation

Advocacy that addresses issues of justice is important in promoting reconciliation and peace. Advocacy for certain populations such as child-headed households, unaccompanied minors, widows, disabled children and adults is also very important.

Cleansing ceremonies can often provide a child with a chance for a new beginning. This may be particularly relevant for children who have witnessed or committed major acts of violence. Projects focusing specifically on cleansing may do more than merely help the children involved. They may also facilitate reconciliation and peace among warring parties.

Demobilisation and social reintegration

It is important to recognise the link between demobilization and social re-integration. Programs to demobilise former child soldiers are concerned with the successful re-integration of those children into their local communities. The success of these programs is dependent on community participation because the care and protection of children and their re-integration rests with their families and the other members of their local communities. It is community members who hold the local knowledge about cleansing ceremonies, recovery and well-being of the children. It will be the community members who will, to a large degree, determine the extent to which the children are accepted back into the community.

However, communities may need help in facilitating the successful re-integration of former child soldiers. They may need to be sensitised to the plight of the children and helped to understand what the children have been through. Communities may also need help understanding the reasons why the children became involved in the conflict. Finally, they may need help in organizing the events and resources that are needed for successful re-integration.

Recognising the importance of children’s access to services – Sri Lanka

“Days of Tranquillity”- A process during which UNICEF negotiated with both the Government and LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) for a 2-days ceasefire to allow access to health services (particularly immunization) and to raise awareness in the community on the importance of Education for All. The days of tranquillity were successful in identifying children out of school and assisting communities to find local solutions to send their children back to school.

UNICEF (2002): Lessons learned in psychosocial programs world-wide

Advocating for children’s rights at a policy level

Children’s rights can be advanced by organisations advocating at the level of policy. Organisations can:

- Promote children’s rights within their own organisations
- Promote national and international policies in support of children’s rights
- Educate donors about the rights of children and effective care and protection initiatives, and
- Advocate to promote training and standards for psychosocial practice.

Influencing local policy – East Timor

Technical assistance in the development of policy and legislation surrounding the protection of children and women's rights is an important aspect of UNICEF support to the new country of East Timor. UNICEF is providing advice and comments on specific policy and legislation such as; the criminal procedure code, penal institutions, legal aid, juvenile justice, inter-country adoption, child birth registration.

In 2001 UNICEF worked with local partners on the 'working group for child rights in East Timor Constitution' to lobby the Constituent Assembly to include specific guarantees for children in the Constitution. UNICEF helped the group providing information and advocacy materials, technical advice, meeting coordination and financial support for lobbying activities.

UNICEF (2001): Child Protection in East Timor: From emergency assistance to rehabilitation and development

UNICEF and other organisations can play an important role in enabling the advocacy of children's rights at a local level either through funding, expertise, or other support.

In East Timor UNICEF has organised several training sessions on Juvenile Justice, Child Rights and Protection for Judges, public defenders, prosecutors and judicial officers as well as police officers, NGOs and the Church. These sessions begin with a discussion on the Rights of children in the legal system and the laws protecting them.

IRC and UNICEF(2001): Assessment of the Situation of Separated Children and Orphans in East Timor

Encouraging reconciliation through group activities and peace campaigns

Peace campaigns can take many forms, and can be a powerful way to create a broad base of support for peaceful social change. Public opinion surveys on the peace process have taken place in Somalia. In Colombia, the 'Vote for Peace' project invited citizens to express a mandate for an end to violence. Children were also invited to express their opinions on peace and conflict issues. In Tanzania, a peace week, culminating in a Peace Day, was held in refugee camps. Activities included song, dance and poetry competitions on peace themes, and community discussion forums on peace issues. This initiative will be continued on a yearly basis.

Peace-building through schools in Eastern and Southern Africa

'Peace-building through schools' is a concept around which UNICEF ESARO organises its work in peace education (1997). The focus is on using the activities of daily school life, rather than a curriculum, to promote peace. The school as an institution plays a role in peace-building through inviting the school community — the children (class by class), the teachers, and the parents through the PTA — to contribute to peace-building in the community. The school develops a peace plan with all these stakeholders, the aim of which is to assist the community in some way. Peace plans have included such elements as organizing games and sports in which out-of-school children join in with children enrolled in the school; clearing a market space in the village; having rotating groups of students assist families in need with their chores, work, or child-minding; using some Saturdays to work with or play with out-of-school children; making improvements to the school environment; helping children in younger classes with doing their sums, listening to them practise reading, or teaching them new games.

An important element of this approach is that the school as an institution reaches beyond the school, giving children the opportunity of mixing with a 'different' community. This increases the feeling of belonging to the same neighbourhood or district, and encourages children to communicate with others, accept differences, and value the qualities of the children in the neighbouring school. The collaborative partnerships that are formed between schools help to promote peace in the wider society.

The program is initiated by a facilitator who organises sensitisation and conflict resolution workshops for the adult leaders of the school, the parents and teachers together. Teachers are also trained in pedagogical approaches which encourage planning and decision-making on the part of children and parents, to enable them to be more actively involved in school outreach activities. This process addresses the hidden curriculum of the school, while sensitizing parents, teachers and administrators to issues of peace and conflict.

The 'peace-building through schools' approach may be used instead of a curricular approach to peace education or, as in the case of Burundi, serve as a complement to an existing peace education curriculum.

UNICEF (1999): Peace Education in UNICEF

Education for peace and conflict resolution

It is important to interrupt the psychological process of learning to hate the 'enemy other'. UNICEF see the fostering of attitudes which will allow inter-generational cycles of violence to be broken as a long-term essential. Peace education is intended to impart new skills and values to help students resolve and prevent conflict in their lives. The emphasis is on children's rights –respect for each other, the importance of non-discrimination, rejection of violence, as well as on the language of peace.

UNICEF has developed programs of peace education in a number of countries, some of which have been incorporated into national curricula. In Lebanon, for example, children are taught problem-solving, negotiation and communication skills. The goal is to encourage children to claim peace as their right. In Sri Lanka, an Education for Conflict Resolution program integrates into every subject of the primary school curriculum the values of compassion, tolerance and non-violent conflict resolution. In Guatemala, youth groups are trained in democratic behaviour.

Advocating against military recruitment of minors

Organisations concerned with child soldiers advocate against the military recruitment of minors by attempting to persuade governments to introduce laws prohibiting the recruitment of children under the age of 18. Organisations can also undertake education campaigns to persuade children, parents and other community members to resist military recruitment. Assisted is also needed in providing children and young people with protected and constructive means of participation in their community, as an alternative means to joining an armed cause.

Case study of UNICEF's Advocacy interventions in Sierra Leone

Advocacy: UNICEF has taken a leading role in advocating for the rights of the child, release and the demobilization. For example, they have facilitated training about children's rights to 5000 members of the armed forces.

Child Protection within the process of the Special Court and Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Commission and Special Court are in the process of establishment. UNICEF brought together experts to identify procedures that ensure the protection of the rights of children. It will continue to be involved in monitoring the process to ensure the protection of the children's rights and physical protection.

Working with Government: UNICEF works with the MSWGCA to coordinate interventions, produce mechanisms for collaboration, guidelines and policies, and maintain a database on children registered as separated or demobilised. UNICEF also supports the re-establishment of the social welfare system and infrastructure.

In 2002, there are plans to provide "psychosocial and social development" training for 100 social workers and care workers and 100 teachers.

UNICEF (2002): Lessons learned in psychosocial programs world-wide

Media training

This is one way to influence media producers to reduce violence and to increase peaceful content of radio and television programs for children. Media training has been carried out in Sri Lanka and is planned in Egypt. Egypt is also planning to create a violence rating system for television and movies and a child-centred 'media watch' group. Media awareness training for parents and children may be one way to help to lessen the impact of violent media programming.

Television and radio spots have been used in Burundi to raise public awareness of peace and conflict issues and the 'Radio for Development' initiative has been tried in Mozambique.

Conclusion

In today's world, millions of children live in unstable situations. Unstable situations can have wide reaching effects on children, their families and society. While it is necessary to address the causes of this instability, it is also essential to work to reduce the effects that instability brings.

This publication sets out principles for good practice and good policy for work with children in unstable situations. The examples of good practice from around the world clearly demonstrate that it is possible to work with children to create a better world for all.

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