

“Will you listen?”

Young voices from conflict zones





CHILDREN AND CONFLICT IN A CHANGING WORLD

The 1996 UN report “The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children”, widely known as the Machel study, for the first time brought the issues faced by children in armed conflict to international attention. Ten years later, a strategic review has now been convened to assess progress and look forward to identify key challenges and priorities for the future of the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda. The resulting report is to be presented to the General Assembly in October 2007, with the publication of more detailed analysis and findings to follow over the next year.

This Companion to the 10 year Machel Strategic Review compiles the views and recommendations of some **1,700 children and young people in 92 countries**. Their thoughts and ideas were collected as a key contribution to the Review through a series of focus group discussions and an online questionnaire¹.

Focus group discussions were conducted by UNICEF, UNFPA and NGO partners in 18 countries, and involved approximately **1385 participants in 125 focus groups**². The discussions were conducted in countries recently or currently affected by armed conflict³. The online survey received **385 responses from a total of 92 different countries**, a majority of which (78%) were from developing countries.

The focus group discussions included children and young people who have experienced conflict themselves, with many of the participants speaking about how their own lives have been affected. Facilitators tried to ensure a safe environment, to use the local language where appropriate and to create a certain ‘comfort level’ for the participants despite the unique challenges in each country⁴.

For example, participants in Rwanda requested to submit their answers in writing, as they felt talking about their experiences in a group setting would open up many wounds. A focus group discussion in Somalia was held through a radio show in which more than 140 children and young people called in to talk about their experiences.

The following pages present a wide range of voices, concerns and demands captured by these discussions and online surveys. For more details and background on the survey that lead to this companion report, please visit www.unicef.org/voy

This report was compiled and edited by Vidar Ekehaug from the Global Youth Action Network (GYAN) and Cherner Bah, Special Youth Fellow at UNFPA. Special thanks go to Mima Perisic, Naseem Awl and the Division of Communication from UNICEF, Cécile Mazzacurati and David Del Vecchio from UNFPA, Susan Nicolai from the Machel Review Secretariat, Jenny Perlman Robinson from the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and all the GYAN team.

¹ The survey process was organized by partners including the Global Youth Action Network (GYAN), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Women’s Commission for Refugee Children and Women.

² See Annex III for full breakdown of focus groups. There was an intentional effort to include children and older youth who had lived through conflicts and were able to reflect on their experiences.

³ Focus groups, organized at the initiative of various partners took place in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo (Serbia), Liberia, Nepal, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda. These countries were either included in the 2006 Annual Report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/61/529-S/2006/826) or were visited by Mrs. Machel to prepare the 1996 study.

⁴ See Annex II for full gender, age and regional breakdown of online survey respondents.

“Will you listen?”

Young voices from conflict zones

We are displaced children.

We are children who have been used by armed groups.

We are orphans.

We are street children.

We are girls who sell our bodies to survive.

We are children who have to work

We are children who can't go to school.

We are children with disabilities.

We are children living with HIV.

We are detained children.

We are girls who have been raped.

We are children taking care of our brothers and sisters.

We are children without a childhood.

“We have all lost a part of our life, and it will never come back.” –
Young man, 18, Burundi

We are from Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo (Serbia), Liberia, Nepal, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda and many other countries.

We won't tell you our names because it could be dangerous for us.

We all have one thing in common: Our lives have been affected by armed conflict. That is why, even though we come from different places and our problems are not always the same, we speak with one voice.

We have not given up all hope yet. We still want to go to school and play with our friends. We want to help build peace in our societies and make this world a better place. We still have big dreams.

For some of us, getting together for the sake of this report gave us a rare opportunity to sit with our friends and share our stories. It has also been an opportunity to finally tell you what we feel and think.

But talking is not enough. Will we see any change after you meet to talk about us? Will you hear our voices and act on what we tell you?

We have tremendous energy and a strong will to fight for our futures. Many of us are already taking action. Will you join us?

WE LIVE IN VIOLENCE

***"They are not human. They worship guns. They don't have sisters and brothers, they only have a gun."* – Girls and young women, 14–17, Somalia**

"There has been violence all our lives. People see violence, they grow up with it, and they know it. They repeat it. There is no food, no work, no education, but there is pressure from the family. And there is nothing to stop violence, there is impunity." – Young people, 15–19, sex not specified, Haiti

"We were mobilized by our clan militia heads to come to the playground. All of us were young people about the same age. They told us to defend our village. We were in the queue with our guns. When the Marehan clan attacked us we defended our village." – Boys and young men, 14–17, Somalia

"Girls also are enrolled in the army, to fight or to carry ammunition and other loads." – Young people, 15–23, sex not specified, Burundi

"After I was taken to the front, they give me blood to drink which they said was the first test, and will make me more and more brave." Young man, age not specified, Liberia

"Orphans and street children join militias at clan checkpoints to rape, loot and kill the people. They are security guards of the warlords. The oldest of them is 17 years old. They are sent by the warlords. If you try to advise them they will kill you. We see them taking drugs before they go to fight and the possibility to escape from them is rare." – Girls and young women, 14–17, Somalia

"People are drunk and fighting. Everything is different than home. My father hits my mother and drunken people destroy light bulbs and buildings." Girl, 14, Sri Lanka, internally displaced persons (IDP) transit centre

"My father used to hit my mother and all of us. He has no job and the family's needs are enormous. The only way for him to express his frustration is by shouting and hitting." – Girl, 14, Occupied Palestinian Territory

In wars, we suffer from and witness some of the worst forms of violence committed against us and the people we love. Some of us have been *born in the midst of this violence*. It has become a way of life.

Many of us, especially the boys, are *forced to join various armed forces*. They then put us *in the front of the battlefields* or force us to spy on the opposition. *They brainwash us* into believing that we are fighting to defend our rights and our communities. Even the girls are put through this.

As soldiers, we are sometimes given strong drugs and put through *grotesque rituals* to make us "strong" and not afraid.

Some of us who have lost our parents and live in the streets are *tempted to join the militia*: At least they will take care of us.

Violence is all around us every day, not only in the battlefields. Sometimes those who care for us – even family members and teachers – treat us badly and without respect. They may beat us or make us feel as though we are nothing. We know that the war has been hard on everyone, but do we have to be treated this way?

Even *when wars end, the violence does not stop*. It shows itself in many other forms—through gangs, our families and sometimes "violence just for the fun of it."

Some of us see *small guns and harmful drugs* sold everywhere in our communities. Some of us are easily trapped in this culture of guns and drugs which has changed our communities into violent places that make us feel unsafe and fill us with fear.

"Drugs are the root cause of recent armed conflict. Because of drug trade money, people can acquire arms. These people start using drugs, which makes them act violently, more and more so, until they spur each other on to murder, to rape and to abuse children." – Young men, 16–18, Haiti

"Children and young people are turned into thieves and become addicted to drugs." – Girl, 14, Colombia

"There are many of us who do not have jobs or anything. Some people in my family still fear me because they still believe I have the 'bush trick' in me; we get the evil eye and are discriminated against. There is nowhere to go. This is my home and my country too. I can't go anywhere if I run to Guinea. I know no one there. I would still have to struggle. At least here I can manage..." – Young man, 22, Sierra Leone

"It should be remembered that many of us are involved in crime and in violence to help our families. There are still no alternatives for us."
– Young woman, 17, Haiti

Many of our friends become *drug addicts* and *sell drugs* to survive. It becomes an escape.

For the ex-combatants among us, when we return to our communities, we do not feel comfortable leaving our houses. Our communities treat us like outcasts. They call us bad names and some tell their children not to play with us. Other children make fun of us at school. They don't even care about how we feel or what we want.

Joining violence is sometimes the only way to survive and protect our families. We need another way.

WE LOSE OUR HOMES AND THOSE WE LOVE

“During the war, I lost my 10-year old brother and 14-year old sister. Our house was damaged. My father died and now my older brother works.” – Young woman, 15, Afghanistan

*“When conflict broke out in our community, **we fled our homes** and it felt like the bullets were chasing us through the woods.” – Young woman, 17, Philippines*

*“In Somalia, we now have ‘seafarers’ who offer us the false promise of a better life, when we pay them to take us across to Yemen. Many of our friends, brothers and sisters **do not survive these trips**, as they often ordered to swim the last part of the journey.” – Age and sex not specified, Somalia*

*“We live in a **huge prison**, deprived of the least simple rights that any individual should have.”—Young woman, 17, Occupied Palestinian Territory*

“The biggest challenge is the freedom of movement and education system.” – Young people, sex not specified, 17–20, Kosovo (Serbia)

“Our home was damaged during war and we migrated to Pakistan. We lived for 10 years in Pakistan. We came back to Afghanistan. We

For many of us, war came to our towns and villages before we knew what was happening. We had to run, often with little more than the clothes on our backs. We were *forced to flee* so suddenly that we became separated from our families and neighbours, sometimes forever.

Can you imagine what it would be like to suddenly *lose everything* – to be uprooted from your home, your livelihood, your friends and maybe even your family? To start again in a new place is not easy. We miss our teachers and our friends. We miss relatives and neighbours and other people we loved and looked up to for guidance.

Some of us walk across barren deserts or *risk our lives to reach another country*, in hopes of finding a better life, free of violence and poverty and fear.

For some of us, the problem is not being forced to move. It is being *unable to move*.

But others of us are *forced to seek refuge*

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_20485

