

## IMPACT ON WAR ON CHILD: Analysis of psychological effects and need for Monitoring Mechanisms.



Priti Sharma  
Ist SEMESTER (LLM)  
(Gujarat National Law University)

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### Abstract:

It is very well said by Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." But Eighteen million children are being raised in the chaos of war. In the past ten years, as a result of armed conflict, over 2 million children have been killed, 6 million have been disabled, 20 million are homeless, and more than 1 million have become separated from their caregivers. Some are recruited to become soldiers themselves and are placed directly in the firing line. When the heat of battle is over, landmines and unexploded ordinance can leave a deadly legacy for years.

Insurgent armies in India's restive Northeast region are exploiting the area's poverty to recruit and press-gang underage fighters and the problem has dramatically worsened in recent years. The Asian Centre for Human Rights says there are at least 500 child soldiers now in the Northeast. In Afghanistan children are "being used to perpetrate attacks and, in some cases, as human shields by the Taliban and other insurgents.

In 1996, Graça Machel, released a UN report entitled "The Impact of War on Children," bringing international attention to the subject among policy makers and academics. The 10 recommendations made in the report have become guiding principles to aid war-affected children. In this paper the author will be exploring the various reasons which result in non application of International protocols which prohibits injury to children and restricts recruitment under certain conditions, emphasis should be on psychosocial needs of war-affected children. Not only ongoing war but the paranoia or possibility of war can also severely affect the psychology of a generation of children.

Keywords: *press-gang underage fighters, human shields, aid war-affected children.*

During War, children and young people's rights are violated on a large scale; their rights to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect, to live in dignity and be supported to develop to their full potential. Eighteen million children are being raised in the chaos of war. In the past ten years, as a result of armed conflict, over 2 million children have been killed, 6 million have been disabled, 20

million are homeless, and more than 1 million have become separated from their caregivers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Invisible Trauma War Affected Children, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/talking-about-trauma/201304/the-invisible-trauma-war-affected-children>, accessed on 11th September, 2016.



The major psychological consequence of war .children and young generation lose their confidence .their trust in others and their trust in the future. This impact make them anxious, depressed, rebellious and aggressive. Consequences of War make lot of people refugees ,drag them away from their original place of residence ,make them homeless.it is not uncommon that children get separate from their parents because of various reasons like their father going to serve in the army, death of the parents in the War. Or evacuation from an area as a part of war time emergency. In England during the Second World War, children were often billeted to foster parents. The change in living standards whether for the better or worse was in many cases not welcome?

A child's life gets altered by the instance of war and its after effects on them at such tender age are often neglected. There is need for specific attention to such population comprising of children to be secured with proper medical facilities, rehabilitation from War trauma, re-joining an educational facility, accommodation etc. With support from International organization working in the field of funding such facilities appropriate to re-settle and rebuild such amenities to create such conducive environmental for healthy physical, social and mental development of war-affected children.

#### PHYSICAL HARM AND IMPERCEPTIBLE TRAUMA FACED BY WAR AFFECTED CHILDREN

##### 1) PHYSICAL EFFECT ON CHILD:

Recent developments in warfare have significantly heightened the dangers for children. During the last decade, it is estimated (and these figures, while specific, are necessarily orders of magnitude) that child victims have included:

- 2 million killed;
- 4-5 million disabled;
- 12 million left homeless;

- More than 1 million orphaned or separated from their parents;
- Some 10 million psychologically traumatized.<sup>2</sup>
- These little life without any cause lost their life in the fight of two entities. Children without any reason have, always been caught up in warfare. They left with no choices but to face the horror of the warfare. And children have always been particularly exposed. In the situation of warfare it is quite common that food supply will run short, the child generation needs proper health care for their development and their growing bodies need steady supplies of essential nutrients. And the trauma of exposure to violence and brutal death has emotionally affected generations of teenage for the rest of their lives.
- Direct and indirect effect of War increase the child death in the warfare time period or make them gravely ill. After signing so many treaties or protocol on protection of child and women still at the time of conflict or war they are most effected groups, hospitals and health centres are destroyed, Children are most vulnerable to diseases like diarrhoea, malaria and cholera. Treatment is simple and cheap, but millions of children have died through lack of it.<sup>3</sup>These ongoing stresses have strong and lasting effects on children's socio-emotional well-being and their growing brains.
- Effect on children on Syria warfare: Research suggests that the physical consequences of conflict on a child's brain development can have adverse and these consequence are the potential for permanent changes to the brain's architecture. Without adequate intervention and the presence of protective and caring relationships, Syria's war could have a lasting impact on children's learning abilities, memory,

<sup>2</sup><http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/1cinwar.htm> visited on 14th October 2016

<sup>3</sup><https://www.warchild.org.uk/issues/effects-war-children> visited on 19th October 2016



social interactions, stress and fear responses, and the ability to control emotions. These war affected children from Syria warfare could lead to long-term mental health.<sup>4</sup>

- War results in numerous unsafe instances of kids who are gravely injured. Removal of appendages, loss of visual perception, or starvation and sickness over long stretches devastatingly affect the mind of the young generation, who survive this experience.
- There are not very many restrictive studies on the mental impacts of harm, however it has been noticed that a considerable measure of its impacts rely on upon the post war treatment. In nations such as Iraq and numerous African nations, the war harmed individuals keep on driving a crushed life. On the off chance that they are not completely impeded, numerous look upon their lives as a waste as they grow up and don't falter to join the terrorist bunches. They themselves neglect to show appreciation to lives of different people, and have no admiration for their own lives either, which makes them much more unsafe.<sup>5</sup>
- In zones such as **Japan (after the nuclear bomb pulverization)**, where adequate post war backing is given, in spite of the fact that the youngsters show side effects of PTSD for long, they step by step consolidate themselves with the standard. They take their debilitations if any into their step. However even among such youngsters, particularly on the off chance that they are more established,

self-destructive propensities have been noted.<sup>6</sup>

- **Spanish Civil War,1937**Mr.RICHARD W. B. ELLIS, O.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P.(Professor of Child Life and Health, University of Edinburgh) had done a research on war impact on child health and marked that in Rotterdam and The Hague, where there was a period of acute under nutrition affecting the whole population for a relatively short and well-defined period in 1944-45, it was calculated that 50% of the female population became amenorrhoea, and that nine months later the birth rate was less than a third of the normal for the same cities (Smith, 1947). In Berlin the infant mortality rate in the British zone rose to well over 200 infant deaths per thousand live births between July and December, 1945, approximately four times the pre-war rate in Germany.<sup>7</sup>
- It is known that exposure to intense acute and chronic stressors during the developmental years has enduring neurobiological effects vis-a-vis the stress response and neurotransmitter systems with subsequent increased risk of anxiety and mood disorders, aggressive dyscontrol problems, hypimmune dysfunction, medical morbidity, structural changes in the CNS, and early death (DeBellis, Baum, et al., 1999; DeBellis, Keshavan, et al., 1999; Heim, Meinschmidt, & Nemeroff, 2003; McEwen, 1998).<sup>8</sup> UNICEF (1996) noted that many more children die from starvation, sickness, and stress of flight than from the immediate effects of

<sup>4</sup><http://www.wvi.org/experts/article/syria%E2%80%99s-children-%E2%80%93-how-conflict-can-harm-brain-development> , Syria's children – how conflict can harm brain development by Alison Schafer, Senior Programme Advisor, Mental Health & Psychosocial Support visited on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis\\_safety/children\\_war\\_general.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/children_war_general.aspx) visited on 7th September 2016

<sup>6</sup><http://www.newsguide.us/education/psychology/Children-War-and-Terrorism> visited on 7th September 2016

<sup>7</sup>Richard W. B. Ellis ,”Effects Of War On Child Health” The British Medical Journal, Vol. 1, No. 4544 (Feb. 7, 1948), pp. 239-245  
Published by: BMJ

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25362289> visited on 20th September 2016

<sup>8</sup>Psychological Effects of War and Terrorism on Children by AnirudhPurwar Arnab DhabalDiptarkaChakravarty



violence. In Africa it is reported that children die 20 times more frequently from lack of medical services and starvation than physical injuries from war.<sup>9</sup>

## 2) PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF WAR ON CHILDREN

- The frequency of occurrence of war or war like situations play a major role in shaping the psychological experiences for the children being affected by the war. Children who are being brought up in war-like situations are able to develop tough and aggressive mentality in order to accommodate with the ruthless environment. It is more difficult for children facing the gates of war for the first time to adapt to the change of events and the brutality coming with it.
- Displacement, death or injury to the parent contributes heavily to this experience, many children lose their parents during the war making them vulnerable to the ongoing war. Even if the children orphaned during the war are provided with residential capacity their childhood is inevitably changed leaving them with new guardians. The psychological impact is more deeper if the tragic death of the parent is witness by the child. Such events can leave an everlasting traumatic memory with is haunting reminiscence of the damage done during the war. The separation from either or both the parents can cause a huge emotional upheaval as the first and primary source of emotional attachment gets uprooted, leaving a void with is not easy to be filled.
- As modern day weaponry becomes more lethal and ground warfare is being heavily assisted through air support. Indiscriminate air attack leaves thousands of civilians injured with most effected being children. Despite many International Humanitarian Conventions

and Protocol binding nations to abide by such documents during the course of warfare there have been many instances where such humanitarian principals were being put at stake in order to attain swift victory or in order to accomplish surprise attack on the enemy state or organization.

- The lack of humanism witness by the child during the war and after it creates a social gap which makes them vulnerable to adopting such violent means in future. This non-attainment of pro-social maturity is due to mistreatment, disregard and constant exposure to violence. Constant War Zones around the world have witnessed more propensity of child soldier and potential future soldiers than regions with political stability. Many leaders prefer using children to adults, as they tend to be more submissive, less demanding, do not question orders and are easier to manipulate<sup>10</sup>.
- Middle East, Balkan, North Caucasus and Africa are the most prominent examples of such warzones as the local recruitment of children is very prevalent in order to instil the animosity for the warring enemy and to sustain the strength of soldier unit so as to maintain fresh blood . This exposure to violence on daily basis and persistent fear of a new attack leaves a psychologically devastating impact on the children. Despite no official count on the number of children involved in the 1991-1995 Balkan wars, Croatia's Association of Underage War Volunteers of the Homeland War estimates that some

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/1cinwar.htm> visited on 13th September 2016

<sup>10</sup> Harvey Rachel, 'Recruitment and deployment of child soldiers – The beginning of the end?', *Child Right* [March 2000], Issue 164; <http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/News%20Folder/Future/2000News/Comments/DraftOPCS.htm>, assessed on: 15/06/2007 ; accessed on 14th September, 2016.





3,000 boys fought in the conflict.<sup>11</sup> Not only ongoing war but the paranoia or possibility of war can also severely affect the psychology of a generation of children. Due to such atmosphere of warfare, the children are severely affected as they are deprived of a socially sound environment but instead have to cope with constant danger of life and injury, no proper infrastructure for education and healthcare

After the end of Second World with the defeat of Axis Powers, the fear receded and with the institution of United Nations, a new hope was conjured to prevent future warfare's like the two World Wars. This hope was not entirely dashed as there has been no Third World War but the polarization of world politics lead to the formation of two poles: Capitalist(USA) and Socialist (USSR). This gave birth to the era of Cold War and with it came the paranoia which affected an entire generation of children and majorly those of USA and USSR. The fear of a war took a prominent position in US educational system where school going children were being addressed to war propaganda. Films were being shown on nuclear explosion and how to what steps to be taken to be safe during such explosions and encouraged to "duck and cover" – hide under desks – to escape the effects.<sup>12</sup> In Soviet Union propaganda was being sold to the citizens with heavy censorship where media was state controlled. The Space and Destructive Weapon Race with USA was a source of pride. USA was portrayed as aggressor in order to generate the necessity of the motherland to be defended.

<sup>11</sup>Child Soldiers Of The Balkans, January 23, 2016, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Child\\_Soldiers\\_Of\\_The\\_Balkans/1349516.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Child_Soldiers_Of_The_Balkans/1349516.html), accessed on 12th Jan, 2016.

<sup>12</sup>Cold War paranoia: fear of the Reds and the Bomb, [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/bridge-of-spies/cold\\_war\\_paranoia/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/bridge-of-spies/cold_war_paranoia/), accessed on 21st September, 2016.

International Protocols prohibiting direct part in hostilities and recruitment of children

### 1) International Humanitarian Law

**Additional Protocols to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (1977):**

- The minimum age for recruitment laid down by the protocol is 15, it is applicable on the circumstances of armed conflict. This minimum standard is applicable on all parties in both international and internal armed conflict.

**Article 77(2) of Additional Protocol I: relevant to international armed conflicts, states:**

- The conflicting parties under this protocol are being bound to take such reasonable measures so as to ensure that the children below fifteen years of age don't get directly implicated and become part of the hostilities. The restriction on recruiting is relaxed in the 15-18 age group but the recruitment the parties to the conflict are persuaded by using the words "shall endeavour" to give priority to those who are the oldest.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See: Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol I) (with annexes, Final Act of the Diplomatic Conference on the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts dated 10 June 1977 and resolutions adopted at the fourth session). Adopted at Geneva on 8 June 1977, "The Parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years the Parties to the

**Article 4(3)(c) of the Additional Protocol II: relevant to non-international armed conflicts states:**

- There shall be no recruitment in the armed forces or group of children who are below fifteen years of age and should be restricted to take direct part in hostilities

Despite sincerity from UN to curb the disastrous impact of war on children through the document the true tales of these unfortunate lands reveal a drastic contrast of what actually happens. Children have been massively deployed as troops and have been taking part in direct hostilities for years. The implementation and check on such violation is the major concern which often gets diluted in diplomatic compromises or in dealing with hostile states/ organization.

**2) Customary International Humanitarian Law :**

The law is formed out of rules that take its origin from the general practice accepted as law due to their customary nature as such practices were being used from over the years by different states. This customary law stands autonomous from treaty law. Thus the rules practiced in this law provides for, **“children must not be recruited into armed forces or armed groups” and that “children must not be allowed to take part in hostilities”**<sup>14</sup>, which is applicable to armed conflicts of both international and non-international nature.

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conflict shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.” ,  
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201125/volume-1125-I-17512-English.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> See: Child Soldiers International,  
[http://www.child-soldiers.org/international\\_standards.php](http://www.child-soldiers.org/international_standards.php),  
accessed on 18th September, 2016.

**MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISM AND GUIDELINES MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISM (MRM) ON SEVERE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT**

The UN has been empowered by the resolutions made by the Security Council in order to efficiently take hold of the grave matters of violation against children during armed conflict. This resulted in formation of country-specific MRM (**Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms**). These mechanisms are employed in listing of parties to the conflict according to the annual report on Children and Armed Conflict are responsible for recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, sexual violence against children, and attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons; the establishment of country-specific MRM<sup>15</sup> Systematic and comprehensive monitoring, reporting and oversight, as requested by the United Nations Security Council resolutions 1539 and 1612, should cover all violations against children affected by armed conflict and could be performed by governments or non-State parties to the conflict.<sup>16</sup>

Through the task forces in conflict affected countries covered by the MRM, UNICEF and partners collect information on grave violations committed against children to share with the UN Security Council and to develop appropriate responses to respond to children's needs. As co-chair of each country-based MRM task force, UNICEF engages with government forces and rebel

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<sup>15</sup> Refer to the MRM Field Manual: **Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations Against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict**. OSRSG-CAAC, UNICEF & DPKO, April 2010 ([www.mrmtools.org](http://www.mrmtools.org))

<sup>16</sup> Child Protection Information Sheet : **Protection Children During Armed Conflict** , [http://www.unicef.org/chinese/protection/files/Armed\\_Conflict.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/chinese/protection/files/Armed_Conflict.pdf), accessed on 12th September, 2016.



groups perpetrating recruitment or use of children, killing, maiming, rape or other sexual violence to develop action plans to end and prevent these violations from taking place, noting that governments hold ultimate responsibility for protecting children and ending impunity for grave violations against children.<sup>17</sup>

The grave violations against children during armed conflict are being monitored through the creation of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (SCWG-CAAC); and the requirement of dialogue with listed parties on the development of concrete and time-bound Action Plans to halt and prevent violations.<sup>18</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Committed governments, international welfare organizations working with regional organization should work jointly to establish the mechanisms of monitoring and reporting. This should be done in order to bring the perpetrators of grave violence against children being done during an armed conflict to justice. Children are amongst the most vulnerable in any society and any conflict. Impunity for violations against children during armed conflict must end; our children deserve protection.<sup>19</sup> There has been an increasing risk of the participation of under-18s in state armed forces in hostilities or otherwise being exposed to the risk associated with conflict as incidence of armed conflict or intensive armed violence is on the rise in some states in India. This risk is particularly manifest in areas affected by “Naxal violence”, where there have been past reports of children in the ranks of the

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF, Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse [http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929\\_57997.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_57997.html), accessed on 05th September, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Children and Armed Conflict; Working Paper No.1, The Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict :The Legal Foundation October 2009 (Updated November 2013), accessed on 08th September, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Supra Note 19

Special Police Officers (SPOs), who have been known to be involved in counter-insurgency operations.

Child Soldiers International has serious concerns about the lack of effective age verification measures in place during recruitment in state armed forces, including paramilitaries and police forces in India. This is particularly problematic given the low rate of birth registration in the country.<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint the recruitment pattern being employed to use children in an armed conflict. This is because there is no monitoring and reporting agency at work in India. Many NGOs have been working on this issue and provided various reports of such recruitment of children against armed opposition .

It is a failure on the part of the government to not establish systematic monitoring system to curb such recruitment and has instead relied on emergency and security legislation, including by detaining children suspected of association with armed opposition groups. There has been international concerns over underage recruitment in three areas: Jammu & Kashmir, areas affected by “Naxal violence” and Northeast India.<sup>21</sup> It is necessary to make arrangement for monitoring and reporting mechanisms or to allow international agencies which can help in study the affected areas, reasons for its instability and how those children prone to means of violence can be detached from that hostile environment.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid



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