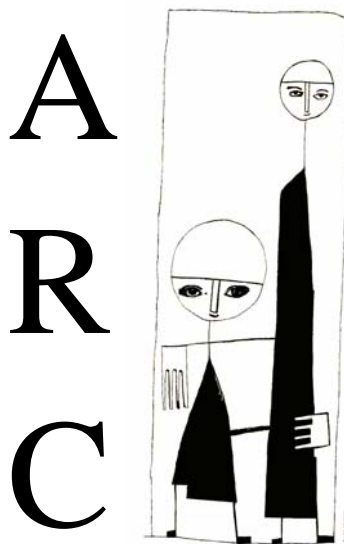# Action for the Rights of Children (ARC)

## Protecting Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Displacement

## An Introductory Training Module



**November 2003**

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# Introductory Training Module

## Introduction

The effective protection of children affected by armed conflict and displacement requires the involvement of a range of actors. It is essential that collaborative and cross-sectoral approaches are developed to include government, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, as well as children themselves and their communities.

The respective capacities of those involved will need to be carefully assessed and, where necessary, strengthened. As a priority for all, the fundamental rights of children must be understood to effectively plan, prepare and implement relevant programmes.

The Note by the Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly, Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children - Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (or Machel Study, 1996), echoes this perspective when speaking of the importance of standards in the field. The Machel Study is considered the definitive report on the affects of armed conflict on children.

> Standards will only be effective… if and when they are widely known, understood, and implemented by policy makers, military and security forces and professionals dealing with the care of children, including the staff of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and humanitarian organizations. Standards should also be known and understood by children themselves, who must be taught about their rights and how to assert them.
>
> Graça Machel. The Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. 1996.

This module is designed to provide an introduction to some of the key principles that must inform our actions on behalf of children. The need to have a clear **understanding of the situation** and the likely effects of a given intervention are addressed, as well as the need to ensure on-going **monitoring and reporting** activities. In addition, the module considers some of the **threats** that are faced by children affected by armed conflict and displacement, and provides a broad overview of various actions that can be directed towards enhancing child protection.

It should be noted that a major focus of these materials, in presenting the situation of children affected by armed conflict and displacement, is refugee and displaced children.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- define the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its place within the broader legal framework;

- assess the types of threat that may be faced by children affected by armed conflict;

- analyse those activities that are likely to contribute to enhanced child protection;

- use the ARC CD-ROM to locate further information.

**HOW TO USE THIS MODULE**

This module is designed for independent **learning by individuals**, or as a starting point for facilitated **group learning**.

Throughout the text there are activities and information to help reinforce your learning. At the end of each major section, you will find an **activity** that relates to the content of the unit, as well as ideas for on-the-job activities that you can complete to see how your office is doing with respect to child rights. We encourage you to complete these activities and to help spread the application of rights-based programming by discussing the main issues of child rights with your colleagues.

| | These boxes provide examples of existing activities or programmes. |
|---|---|

| | These boxes provide additional information related to the main topic. |
|---|---|

You will also find a selection of further resources at the end of each section and tips throughout the text on where to find key information that is available on the ARC CD-ROM. In addition, the ARC Resource Packs found on the CD-Rom

| | These boxes point to references on the ARC CD-ROM. |
|---|---|

contain comprehensive workshop material and references that can be used by facilitators planning a workshop, or by individuals looking for additional information.

## TIPS FOR INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS

It should take you approximately **4 hours** to complete the whole module - roughly one hour to read the content and complete the text-based activity for each unit.

At the end of the module there is a quiz for you to complete. Please take a few minutes to answer the questions as best you can and review your results. The quiz is based on the main messages of the module and will give you an indication on the areas of content you need to review.

We recommend you complete at least **one section** at a sitting. Schedule some time to work on the module and find a quiet place where you can concentrate on the text. If you have questions on the content, write them down at the end of the section in the **Notes** space. You can then look them up later in the text or you may answer your own question during your reading.

## TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

This module can also be used as a guide for facilitated **group learning**.

If you are a Protection and Community Service Officer, responsible for training staff and operational partners, this module may be particularly useful for you to use as a starting point for your training sessions.

If you are a focal point for staff development or children, or if you are interested in discussing child rights with your colleagues, try using the activities as topics for debate in a group learning session. You could also:

- Create a study group to read the sections individually and get together once a week to complete the activities together and discuss the content.

- Use portions of the module to present an overview on child rights to your colleagues.

- Design an awareness campaign based on the facts found here and in the ARC Resource Packs.

If you are a facilitator developing an **ARC workshop**, you can use the activities as ideas for your workshop, or you can designate a part of the module as a pre-workshop activity. For example, you may want to assign the Quiz as a pre-workshop activity. Discussing the answers can be your introduction to the content at the beginning of the workshop.

No matter what type of group learning you may be preparing, remember to include an **evaluation** for both the learners and the event itself. This is extremely important not only for you to gain feedback and ideas from the event but also for participants to summarise for themselves their learning. Going over initial reactions at the end of the event is an example of how to help people focus on what they've learned. You may also want to include the quiz.
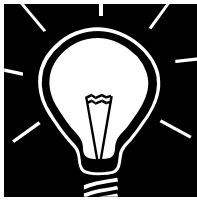
You will also need to give participants a chance to reflect on the experience itself. Did they like the format? Was the amount of time appropriate for the subject? This is important feedback for you and for future sessions.

| | The ARC Facilitator's Toolkit can be found on the ARC CD-ROM. |
|---|---|

# Introductory Training Module

## <u>Unit 1</u>

## A Legal Framework for Child Protection

Children, including adolescents, have physical, psychological and social needs that are very different to those of adults and that must be met to enable healthy growth and development.

The extent to which parents, the family, the community and the society are able to meet these developmental needs (or not) has long-term consequences for the kinds of adults they will become.

Armed conflict, displacement, disruption of normal life, and separation from family and/or community can have powerful, long-lasting effects that need to be compensated for in protection and assistance interventions.

> Approximately 46% of the 11 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide are children. UNHCR, 2002.
>
> Of the 25-30 million IDPs who have lost their homes due to conflict, over half of them are children. OCHA, 2003.

Interventions by outsiders are significant largely to the extent that they strengthen (or inadvertently undermine) family and community capacities to provide this care and protection. There are some circumstances where the urgent needs of children, including adolescents, must be met directly, but maintaining a long-term view is essential to finding ways to enable families and communities to care for and protect their children on an on-going basis.

The fact that around half of all refugee and internally displaced populations are children, including adolescents, gives quantitative significance to these operational issues for humanitarian organisations.

A fundamental element of child protection is the recognition that States have the primary responsibility of protecting the human rights of all persons within their territories. Children share protected universal human rights with all other persons and, because of their dependence, vulnerability and developmental needs, they also have certain additional rights.

The legal basis for prioritised action on behalf of children, including refugee and displaced children, is well established in international law including Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, and Refugee Law.

Familiarity with international law is important because it outlines the obligations of a country in protecting children affected by armed conflict and displacement. It also provides the framework within which those who work on behalf of refugee and displaced children should operate.

> Topic 1 of the ARC Resource Pack, **International Legal Standards** has more information on the three bodies of international law, and how they can be used in the protection of refugee and displaced children.

## CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

Of special significance in relation to children is the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**. It provides a comprehensive code of rights that offer the highest standards of protection and assistance for children of any international instrument.

For work on behalf of children affected by armed conflict and displacement the near universal acceptance of the CRC is especially important as the Convention applies to ALL children within the jurisdiction of each State, regardless of legal status. All but two countries are parties to the Convention (Somalia and the USA are the exceptions).

The CRC defines a "child" as everyone under 18 years of age "unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (Article 1). For normal purposes this means that it can be applied to everyone up to 18, unless it is demonstrated that they are an adult under applicable national law, in which case they can claim the benefits of adulthood, while still being able to claim the protection of the CRC. Outlined in 41 articles are the human rights to be respected and protected for every child under the age of 18 years.

Key aspects of the Convention include the following.

- The protection standards of the CRC go beyond the usual guarantees of health, education and welfare, and include guarantees relating to the child's individual personality, rights to freedom of expression, religion, association, assembly, and privacy.

- The Convention offers a vision of the child as an **individual** and as a member of a family and the community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development. Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity.

- The Convention applies to **all** children within the jurisdiction of the country, including refugee and displaced children.

- The Convention offers potential for the protection of refugee children even in States that are not party to refugee instruments.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE CRC

There are four guiding principles for implementing the rights of the Convention, namely: **non-discrimination**, the **best interests** of the child, the right to **life, survival and development**, and the right to **participation**.

### 1. Non-discrimination

*States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.* **Article 2(1), CRC**

The theme of non-discrimination is of special importance for the protection of refugee and displaced children. It acknowledges that every child within a Member State's jurisdiction should be given the opportunity to enjoy the rights recognised by the Convention without regard to citizenship, immigration status, or any other status.

The rights under the Convention are equally applicable to "aliens", refugees, displaced persons, and even those children who are in the State illegally. Legal status cannot be used as a basis for any form of discrimination against the child.

### 2. Best interests of the child

*In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.* **Article 3 (1), CRC**

Although the principle of best interests is not a new concept, it is particularly important in the context of the CRC, because, for the first time, it clearly links the child's best interests to respect for and fulfilment of their rights.

While Article 3 emphasises that governments and public and private bodies must ascertain the impact of their actions on children, the principle of best interests also applies at the level of the individual child. Any interpretation of the principle must be in the spirit of the entire CRC, with the child being a subject of rights.

In general, the best interests of the child are best assessed on a case-by-case basis, involving the evaluation of all relevant factors and giving due regard to expert advice (both from a legal and child development perspective) **and** the opinions of the child.

> For more information on best interests see the ARC Resource Packs **International Legal Standards** and **Child and Adolescent Development**.

## 3. Right to life, survival and development

*States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life, and, shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.* **Article 6, CRC**

Under Article 6 of the CRC, States must adopt appropriate measures to safeguard life and must refrain from any actions that intentionally take life away. This includes taking measures to increase life expectancy and to lower infant and child mortality, as well as prohibitions on the death penalty. States should fully ensure the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to housing, nutrition and the highest attainable standards of health.

The 'survival and development' principle is not limited to physical aspects but also emphasises the need to ensure full and harmonious development of the child, including at the spiritual, moral and social aspects, where education plays a key role.

## 4. Participation

*"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child".* **Article 12 (1), CRC**

The significance of this article is that the child has the right to influence decisions affecting his or her life. Children should be assured the right to express their views freely, but also, they should be heard and their views be given "due weight".

Participation by children and young people in the activities of the community is an essential component of fulfilling this right. Advocates must recognise that efforts on behalf of children affected by armed conflict and displacement fall short if they are perceived only as individuals to be fed, immunised or sheltered, rather than treated as participating members of their community.

> For more information on participation see the ARC Resource Packs **Child and Adolescent Development** and **Community Mobilisation**.

> *"If the Convention on the Rights of the Child were to be fully implemented during armed conflicts, this would go a long way towards protecting children. Children's right to special protection in these situations has long been recognized".*
>
> Graça Machel. The Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. 1996.

**OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS TO THE CRC**

Alarmed by the widespread involvement of children in armed conflicts, as well as increasing commercial sexual exploitation of children, including through the practice of sex tourism and the growing availability of child pornography, the international community has sought to strengthen the protection elements contained in the CRC.

Two Optional Protocols were adopted by the General Assembly in May 2000, and entered into force in 2002.

**1. The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict** provides that States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces under the age of 18 years shall not take part in hostilities (Article 1), and ensure that persons under the age of 18 years are not compulsorily recruited into their armed forces (Article 2).

**2. The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography** calls on each State Party to proscribe fully, under criminal or penal law, all acts and activities involving offering, delivering or accepting, by any means, a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Article 2 of the Protocol defines what is meant by sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. The Protocol also prohibits the transfer of a child's organs for profit and the engagement of children in forced labour.

Introductory Training Module

# Unit One Activity

**OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this activity, you will be able to:

- explain the importance and scope of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);

- identify articles of the CRC that relate to different aspects of children's lives.

**TIMEFRAME**

30 minutes

**METHOD**

This activity encourages you to take a closer look at the articles of the CRC.

In the table on the following page, four broad clusters are suggested of the types of rights that exist within the CRC. The first cluster, "Survival", is referred to directly in Article 6 of the CRC:

*1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.*

*2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.*

**CRC, Article 6***.*

Three further clusters are proposed namely, Protection, Development and Participation.

You are asked to look at the CRC and identify five articles that reflect each of these other clusters. For example, under participation rights we could include Article 12 (the child's opinion) that refers to the child's right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in matters affecting them.

> To help you with this exercise, refer to the copy of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the ARC CD-ROM under **Reference Materials**, and which provides an unofficial summary of the main provisions.

**UNIT 1 ACTIVITY**

| Category | CRC Article |
|---|---|
| **Survival** | Article 6 recognises the child's inherent right to life |
| **Protection** | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| **Development** | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| **Participation (Civil Rights and Freedoms)** | Article 12, The Child's Opinion |
| | |
| | |
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| | |

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES UNIT 1**

These activities are optional and require an additional commitment of time beyond the four hours that is proposed to complete this module.

**ON-THE-JOB ACTIVITY**

- Consider ways of promoting the CRC within your office using posters, briefings etc. Does your office need to organise some further ARC training?

- Find out what regional instruments protect child rights in your country. Share these with your colleagues.

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**In Addition, Why Not…**

Conduct a survey to assess understanding and awareness of the CRC. This should include partner organisations and local authorities, as well as children and their communities. Identify areas where capacity building activities may be required.

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

You will find the following information on the ARC CD-ROM:

**ARC Foundations:**
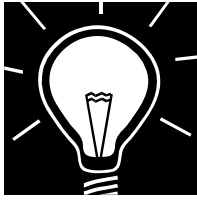
- International Legal Standards - content includes ten different topics covering the legal framework for children affected by armed conflict, as well as many handouts and activities that can be used to further explore the subject.

**Reference Material:**

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (Machel Study)
- Save the Children - Child Rights Programming
- UNICEF Implementation Checklists for the CRC

## Introductory Training Module

### Unit 2
### Identifying Protection Issues for Children

Many different factors, relating to the individual child, the family, the immediate social situation and the wider cultural context may combine to place children in a position where there is risk of threats to their well-being, development and rights. The capacity to anticipate, acknowledge and assess such factors is fundamental to the effective protection of children.

This Unit looks briefly at the factors affecting child development in situations of armed conflict and displacement and considers how these issues are reflected in various stages of an organisations **Programme Cycle**. It continues by introducing the **Resilience model of child development**, which provides a framework for assessing the situation of children in terms of specific threats that they may face and protective factors that exist around them.

**GENERAL FACTORS AFFECTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

It is important to understand what kind of risks children may be facing so that appropriate intervention can be planned. This applies to all programmes, whether or not children are targeted. An important question to ask of any programme is: "What effect will it have on children's rights and child development"?

Armed conflict and displacement pose a wide range of threats to children's development. Often children face an accumulation of risks: for example, the malnourished child may do less well at school, and poor school performance may pre-dispose the young person to exploitative work.

Some of the factors that pose a threat to child development include:

- **Wholesale loss** of the child's home, friends and relatives, familiar surroundings, possessions etc.

- **Lack of health services, clean water and adequate sanitation** can pose particular threats to the health of the growing child. Inadequate immunisation programmes, lack of control of infectious diseases and poor health services are likely to have a considerable impact on healthy development.

- **Chronic poor health**, often associated with malnutrition, can affect the child's natural inclination to explore and learn from the environment, and opportunities for taking part in school and other social activities.

- **Malnutrition** is closely linked to disease. Under-nourished children have less resistance, and once they have a diarrhoeal or respiratory infection eat even less so that a *cycle of disadvantage* is set up which can quickly lead to death.

> **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 and behavioural aspects of development as well as competence in motor functioning.

- **Physical injuries** (and death) are associated with armed conflict. Bombs, shells, bullets and landmines can cause a wide range of physical disabilities and psychological threats.

> More than 2 million children are estimated to have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade. At least 6 million children have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Meanwhile, between 8,000 and 10,000 children continue to be killed or maimed by landmines each year. UNICEF, 2003

- **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. The absence of basic education violates children's rights and often proves to be a life-long handicap.

- **Lack of opportunities for play**: play is an essential part of childhood through which children explore, learn, co-operate, cope and adjust. Through play they handle and re-enact difficult life experiences.

N.B. Unit 3 will look at some specific and critical threats to child development encountered during armed conflict and displacement:

1. experience of violence/fear;

2. separation;

3. abuse and exploitation;

4. association with armed forces.

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

It is important to remember that children and adolescents are not a homogenous group. An understanding is necessary of the differences and implications of gender, age, maturity, social class or caste, cultural or religious background for any given situation.

Also, many of the typically identified sub-groups of vulnerable children may interact and overlap - for example, separated children, street children, child soldiers, child-headed households are not always exclusive categories. While it may be vital to identify particular groups of children whose well-being is threatened, the targeting of special assistance to these groups may have negative, unintended consequences.

In many humanitarian contexts, programme responses emphasise children of primary school age, who are frequently the most visible group of children. However, the relative invisibility of other groups of children (pre-school children, adolescents and disabled children for example) sometimes leads to their relative neglect.

A child-centred situation analysis is an important tool for assessing the particular needs of various children who may require special attention if their assistance and protection needs are to be met adequately. The views of the children themselves, the opinions of adult community members and the insights of local leaders are all essential in determining the extent to which particular children may be at risk.

## THE PROGRAMME CYCLE

The "programme cycle" describes the process through which an organisation plans, acts and then reflects on its actions. Organisations and agencies that are involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance to populations affected by armed conflict or displacement have a responsibility to ensure that their programme cycles are geared towards identifying and responding to the protection issues of the population.

In general terms the programming cycle may be considered in four basic stages:



**Situation Analysis**: gather and analyse information on the status of child rights.

**Priority Setting**: based on the analysis, identify priority areas for programme intervention.

**Implementation Strategies** to be complimented with **Monitoring and Evaluation** to ensure that experience and new knowledge feeds back into the situation analysis.
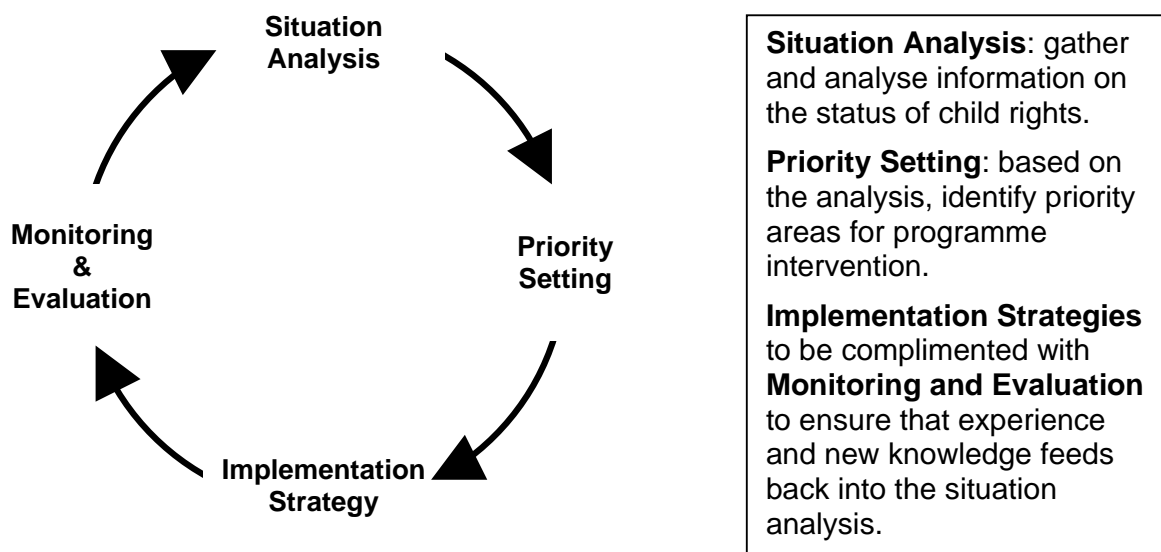
As mentioned, an effective **Situation Analysis** is vital for informing subsequent actions. Situation Analysis is the process of assessing a complex situation within its wider context. This involves systematically gathering information including:

- identifying the main violations of rights within a population;
- identifying the principle resources contained within that population and gaps that may exist;
- and analysing the information gathered in order to facilitate the process of planning in a systematic, strategic and integrated manner.

A key element of this process must be the involvement of children themselves. Participatory methodologies should ensure that the views of children, as well as the opinions of adult community members, are an integral part of the information gathering procedure. It is important to remember however that this role should extend beyond the information gathering phase to include their involvement in analysis and subsequent decision making.

Another key component of the programme cycle, that will also require the direct involvement of the community, is the **Monitoring and Evaluation** stage. Monitoring in particular, must be seen as an on-going process, and it is important that situation monitoring, as well as performance monitoring, reflect not only the issues that are affecting children within the given context but also how the programme is responding.


## A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

A simple but effective framework to use in analysing the information gathered in a given situation, and priority setting and implementation, is the risk/protective factor model that is associated with the resilience of the child.

In situations in which children's development is under threat because of sudden displacement, high priority should be given to restoring a sense of normality in their lives and to protecting them from further threats to their development.

> Children may be especially vulnerable because of their immaturity and reliance on adults for their care and protection. But it is also important to remember that **resilience** as well as vulnerability is a characteristic of the growing human organism.

The term "resilience", when applied to people, describes the capacity of the person to "bounce back" after difficult or stressful experiences.

Resilience in children is a product of personal characteristics, the family environment and the availability of other forms of social support outside of the family, and the interaction between these factors. Focussing on the child's resilience directs attention to their strengths rather than their weaknesses; it underlines the need to identify and strengthen existing support networks within the community and focus on those children and families whose assets and resources may need strengthening, as well as those who may continue to be especially vulnerable even when these resources are in place.

## Strategies to Enhance Resilience

A resilience approach can be considered in two ways:

- **Reducing Risk Factors**. A 'risk-focused approach' in which intervention is based on the identification of specific or potential risk factors. Examples include: preventing child abuse through parent and community education; information campaigns aimed at preventing separation; reducing teenage smoking or drug abuse through youth-to-youth programmes; supplementary feeding centres etc.

- **Strengthening Protective Factors**. A 'resource-focused approach' which will aim to prevent and reduce risk for the population as a whole by improving the number and quality of resources available to support children and their families. This may consist of strengthening existing community resources and reinforcing cultural norms and practices, or, may require new resources such as clubs for children or facilities for parents.

> Underlying both approaches is the need to view children, including adolescents, as **active agents in their own development**, and not as passive victims. Assessments of children need to include their competencies, assets, strengths and resources as well as their problems and areas of vulnerability. The active involvement of young people can be a vital component in preventing and reducing risk and in enhancing resilience.

Introductory Training Module

# Unit Two Activity

**OBJECTIVE**

By the end of this activity, you will be able to:

- identify risk and protective factors for children and their parents/communities.

**TIMEFRAME**

30 minutes

**METHOD**

The resilience model of child development is represented below by way of a diagram. Analysis of the risk and protective factors affecting children can assist in identifying appropriate responses. The presence of risk factors impedes healthy development, while protective factors will promote it.

Risk Factors
for Children

Adulthood

Protective Factors
for Children

Development

Risk Factors
for Parents

Childhood

Protective Factors
for Parents
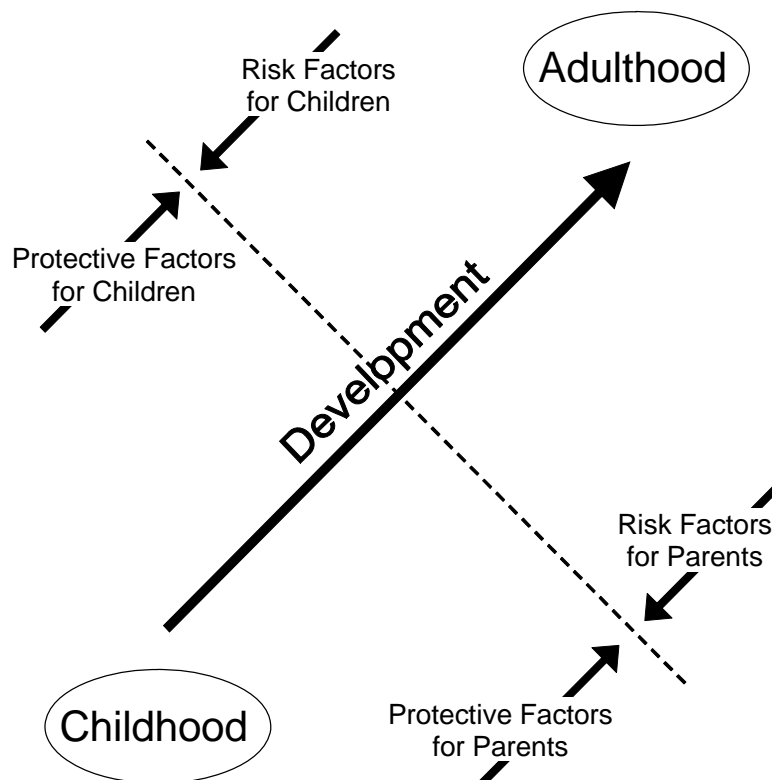
Considering the diagram above, complete the table below.

Some threats, or 'Risks Factors for Children', have already been mentioned in this topic, but can you identify some more? Then consider threats that either the child's parents or the broader community may face in ensuring the child's healthy development. The lower half of the table asks you to consider protective factors that may exist.

In its simplest terms such an analysis can help to guide us in identifying those activities that can reduce the risk factors faced by children but equally can guide us towards those protective factors that, if appropriately strengthened, could also contribute to the well-being of children.

| Risks Factors for Children | Risks Factors for Parents/Community |
|---|---|
| 1. Wholesale loss | |
| 2. Lack of health services | |
| 3. Malnutrition | |
| 4. Physical injury | |
| 5. Lack of education opportunities | |
| | |
| | |
| **Protective Factors for Children** | **Protective Factors - Parents/Community** |
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Please do not feel obliged to provide seven responses for each section of the table!

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES UNIT 2**

These activities are optional and require an additional commitment of time beyond the four hours that is proposed to complete this module.

**ON-THE-JOB ACTIVITY**

- Consider the risk factors and protective factors for children in the situation where you are working, or in a situation that you know well.

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**In Addition, Why Not…**
Develop an analysis of risk factors and protective factors and conduct a review of programme documents to see how these issues are reflected. Bear in mind the resilience model that aims to strengthen the protective factors and reduce the risk factors.

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

You will find the following information on the ARC CD-ROM:

**ARC Foundations:**

- Child and Adolescent Development – Topic 3 of this resource pack introduces the concepts of risk and resilience in children and adolescents, and outlines some approaches which may reduce risk and enhance resilience.

- Situation Analysis – this resource pack emphasises the need to examine particular situations in their broader context, to consider what information is required and how to acquire it, and to analyse it in order to make planning decisions.

**Reference Material:**

- Save the Children - Child Rights Programming
- UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (Machel Study)

# Introductory Training Module



## Unit 3

## Critical Threats to Child Development in Emergency Situations

This Unit looks at some specific and critical threats to child development that can occur in situations of armed conflict and displacement, namely:

- Experiences of Violence and Fear

- Separation from Parents or Other Carers

- Abuse and Exploitation

- Children's Involvement in Fighting Forces

This unit is designed to provide an overview only of each issue - more detailed information can be found in other ARC Resource Packs.

## EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE AND FEAR

- ***Traumatic events such as violence, sudden flight, loss and intense fear can have immediate as well as long-term effects on children.***

- ***High priority should be given to restoring a sense of normality in their lives and to protecting them from further threats to their development.***

Children living in areas affected by armed conflict risk experiencing a number of threats to their development and well-being. In addition to the direct risks to their own physical safety they may face psychological threats including experiencing intense fear, witnessing and perhaps experiencing brutal violence at close quarters, witnessing the destruction of property (possibly including their own homes) and the necessity of fleeing in panic.

Children living in a situation of more prolonged conflict may have to face the constant anxiety of fighting or bombing, and having to cope with the presence of landmines or unexploded ordnance. Many of these experiences can have both immediate and longer-term effects on children's development and well-being.

*Young children* who have had frightening and confusing experiences may lose (usually temporarily) developmental gains such as speech or control of bladder and bowel. Disturbances in sleep and eating habits are also common. The apparent loss of capacity to play is sometimes observed, or children become preoccupied with themes of violence and death in their play and drawing.

Exposure to violent and frightening experiences during adolescence can have a particularly pronounced effect. Adolescent's capacity for learning and for forming relationships can be disturbed. In some cases, faced perhaps with the loss of educational opportunities and a disturbed developmental life-course, many adolescents may come to sense a lack of meaning in life and future prospects. Criminal activity with peers, drug and substance abuse, and other forms of anti-social behaviour may represent a form of meaning as well as an outlet for deep frustration. The vulnerability of adolescents to voluntary recruitment into armed forces reflects the severe impact of traumatic events at this crucial stage of development.

As was discussed in Unit 2, in situations in which children's development is under threat because of sudden displacement, high priority should be given to restoring a sense of normality in their lives and to protecting them from further threats to their development.

The development of strategies to promote the psycho-social well-being of children and families needs to be based on a thorough understanding of existing cultural norms, traditions and practices. For this reason,

> For more information see the ARC Resource Packs **Child and Adolescent Development** and **Working with Children**.

there can be no universal prescription: rather an approach founded on community needs has to be developed.
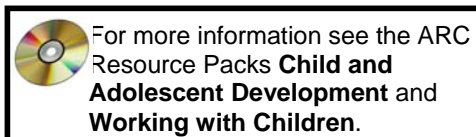
## SEPARATION FROM PARENTS OR OTHER CARERS

- ***High priority needs to be given, in all stages of any emergency, to strategies for the prevention of separation.***

- ***Care arrangements for separated children should, wherever possible, be based on family and community responsibilities for children.***

Separation from family is a devastating event for any child, and it is therefore essential that activities aimed at preventing separations are established as early as possible in any operation. The nature of these activities will depend on a careful analysis of the situation, including the type of displacement that the population is experiencing. It is also necessary to understand some of the reasons why

> ⓘ Children without primary caregivers are deprived of their first source of protection.
> This can be a permanent or temporary situation, ranging from children who have been separated from their families by war, to those who have been removed by the state from parental care, to those who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS (an estimated 13.4 million children).
> UNICEF, 2003

children may become separated in the first place, remembering that separations may be deliberate as well as accidental.
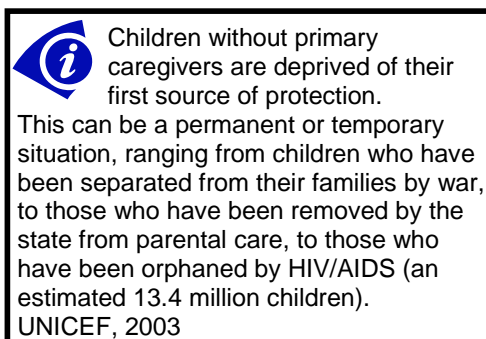
However, children who are alone are not always 'separated'. It should never be assumed that a child is unaccompanied. Even though he or she may have been found alone, there could be family members near by. If there are other members of the community in the vicinity they may be able to provide useful information or even take care of the child.

As a general rule, separated children who are found to be living with extended families or cared for by siblings, or who have been spontaneously fostered should be encouraged to remain, unless there is evidence that to do so is not in the best interests of the individual child. The role of protection staff will be to identify gaps in care and protection and to work to address these.

Institutional forms of care can lead to children becoming detached from their own community and culture and raise serious difficulties in terms of durable solutions. In addition, children's residential centres often unwittingly serve to encourage separations.

Evacuation should only be carried out as a last resort when life is threatened. The evacuation of separated children can create further separations, as families may give up their own children claiming that they are separated. It can also result in separating the children from people in the locality who can provide information useful for tracing purposes.

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**Definitions – unaccompanied and separated children**

**"Separated Children"** are defined in the Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children as "those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may therefore include children accompanied by other adult family members".

Children who are separated from their families and who are totally alone, are classified as "unaccompanied children".

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Unaccompanied and separated children are entitled to international protection under a broad range of international and regional instruments. They require priority action by all concerned organisations. This action should encompass their early identification, special protection and provision of care arrangements, as well as family tracing with a view to their reunification with parents or placement with relatives or other traditional carers.

The process of tracing the families of separated children and returning them to their care (or placing them with other family members) is a complex process which requires close co-operation among a number of agencies, with defined mandates, and close links with the community. There are six broad stages in the process: identification; documentation; family tracing; verification; reunification; follow-up.

Children in emergency situations are not available for adoption.


For more information see the ARC Resource Pack, **Separated Children**.
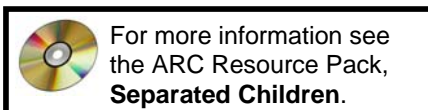
## ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

- ***Refugee and Displaced Children, including adolescents, are at greatly increased risk of various forms of abuse and exploitation.***

- ***Abuse and Exploitation can take different forms, and any particular instance must be understood within its social and cultural context.***

There is now a great deal of evidence that children with a background in armed conflict or displacement are at greatly increased risk of various forms of abuse and exploitation. However, abuse and exploitation are relative concepts that need to be understood in relation to personal values, cultural and community standards, as well as international standards.

**Child abuse** is generally used to describe an act of **commission** that is outside of accepted cultural norms. It can include:

- *physical abuse,* the deliberate use of force on a child's body which may result in injury, e.g. hitting, burning, shaking, choking;

- *sexual abuse,* includes not only violent sexual assault but also other sexual activities, such as inappropriate touching;

- *emotional abuse,* persistent attacks on a child's sense of self, e.g. constant belittling, taunting or humiliation, isolation and intimidation.

-

**Child neglect**, on the other hand, is an act of **omission**, the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Again this can include:

- *physical neglect,* the failure to adequately meet the child's needs for, for example, nutrition, clothing, health care, and protection from harm; and/or

- *emotional neglect,* the failure to satisfy the developmental needs of a child by denying the child an appropriate level of affection, care, education and security.

**Exploitation** is the abuse of a child where some form of remuneration is involved or whereby the perpetrators benefit in some manner – monetarily, socially, or politically. Exploitation constitutes a form of coercion and violence, detrimental to the child's physical and mental health, development, and education.

Armed conflict and displacement, compounded by an erosion of traditional values and cultural norms, create situations where children are at an

> Although difficult to quantify, about 1 million children are exploited every year in the multibillion-dollar sex industry. UNICEF, 2003

increased risk of exploitation including, under-age recruitment, trafficking and smuggling, exploitative child labour, or commercial sexual exploitation.
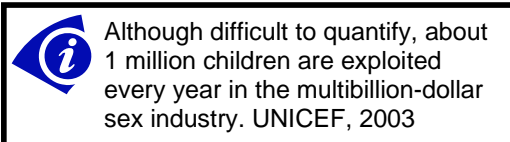
There is growing awareness that the perpetrators of child abuse and exploitation are often known to the child, including not only direct family members but more commonly extended family members, family friends and even other children.

> Children are most often sexually abused by those closest to them.
>
> Since sexual activity is usually regarded as a private matter, governments and communities alike are often reticent to intervene in cases of sexual exploitation. UNICEF, 2003

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. But 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.

An essential aspect of any preventive approach is to ensure that young people themselves are given opportunities to articulate their needs and concerns and to participate actively in the design and implementation of preventive approaches.

Estimates indicate that the majority of sexually abused and exploited children are girls, but it is important to remember that boys are also often victims, and that there may be even greater under-reporting of abuse against them than is the case with girls.

## Responding to Incidents of Sexual Violence

The immediate physical and emotional consequences of abuse and exploitation require a quick response. Humanitarian staff have a duty to intervene whenever cases are reported or suspected. Each case must be carefully handled owing to the extreme sensitivity of such issues. Any action taken should be consistent with the principle of the child's best interests and, in order to determine this, the child's own expressions of his/her wishes and feelings will be vital. If it is necessary to interview a child, the interviewer should be highly skilled, experienced in enabling children to talk about extremely difficult issues and able to deal with overwhelming emotions that the child may be experiencing. Each incident must be examined and assessed so that proper protection, medical services, legal services and psycho-social support can be provided where necessary.

> For more information see the ARC Resource Pack **Exploitation and Abuse**.

## CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT IN ARMED FORCES OR GROUPS

- *Those children most at risk of recruitment need to be specifically identified and planning undertaken to prevent their recruitment.*

- *Demobilisation is the first step in the child's return to a normal life and should be accompanied by initiatives to enable social reintegration.*

While the image often seen of child soldiers is that of "boys with guns", it is important to highlight that girls are also very often associated with these armed forces or armed groups. As with boys,

> At any given time, over 300,000 child soldiers, some as young as eight, are exploited in armed conflicts in more than 30 countries around the world. UNICEF, 2003.

they may have become involved forcibly or voluntarily and, again as with boys, their given roles may involve them as front-line combatants, spies, human shields, porters, cooks or sexual slaves.

The factors that influence the participation of children in armed conflict are complex and responses should be based on an understanding of the social, political and cultural factors which gave rise to their recruitment (whether forcibly or voluntarily).

A key process in addressing these issues is to monitor, document and report actual recruitment practices, and it is important that all concerned recognise the need for an integrated and co-ordinated response to the situation of child soldiers.

Another major element of any strategy is to ensure that children, including adolescents, their families and communities, are informed and empowered to enable them to resist recruitment, to effect demobilisation, and to participate fully in initiatives to secure the social reintegration of former child soldiers.

One of the most challenging effects on children of such experiences is that they have spent a significant part of their childhood in a strictly hierarchical structure and have experienced a socialisation process which serves the purposes of a military command. Clearly such experiences may make it difficult for children, upon release, to adjust and to re-learn new codes of behaviour, and to develop relationships not based on power and fear.

Experience suggests that once these children reintegrate into more normal life, many struggle with a confused sense of who they are, and need long-term support from families and communities. It is not surprising that many remain vulnerable to re-recruitment. An essential aspect of rehabilitation is finding ways of promoting children's self-esteem and a sense of hope and confidence in the future.

### Under-age Recruitment in International Law

In the simplest terms, international law bans any recruitment, and direct involvement in hostilities, of those under 15 years into any form of armed forces or armed groups in any type of armed conflict, international or non-international (CRC Article 38 and 1977 Additional Protocols to the four Geneva Conventions).

However, international law has been developing rapidly towards the position that States shall take measures to ensure that no-one under 18 years of age takes direct part in hostilities nor be recruited (African Charter on the Rights and Welfare

of the Child; ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, No. 182; Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts).

> For more information see the ARC Resource Pack on **Child Soldiers**.

Introductory Training Module
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# Unit Three Activity

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**OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this activity, you will be able to:

• consider the issue of family reunification in a difficult situation;

• discuss dilemmas in determining the child's best interests.

**TIMEFRAME**

30 minutes

**METHOD**

Read the following short case study, while referring to the following articles of the CRC: Article 3, best interests; Article 10, family reunification; Article 12, the child's opinion; Articles 5 and 18, parental rights and responsibilities.

Prepare a briefing note for the Protection Officer analysing the options for the boy and proposing a preferred solution and likely next steps. Make reference to the CRC articles that are mentioned above in your reply.

**CASE STUDY**

In A……….. (a country in Eastern Europe), there is a sporadic civil war between rebels fighting for independence and the government. Many refugees have fled to a neighbouring country which is sympathetic to the rebel cause. After a long lull in the fighting, some refugees are spontaneously returning to their homes and UNHCR is facilitating return on a case-by-case basis, with some basic assistance provided.

A refugee father approaches UNHCR in A………. . He is looking for assistance to secure the return of his 16 year old son who fled to the neighbouring country and has been living in rather unsatisfactory conditions with a group of adolescent boys in an urban setting, with minimal support from UNHCR. The rest of the family has fled to another neighbouring country and have no plans to return.

As a result of the father's representations, a Community Services Officer (following discussion with the Protection Officer) decides to interview the boy. He confirms his wish to return but his manner during the interview leads the CSO to feel that he has some fears which he is unable or unwilling to express verbally. It is learned from reliable sources in A……… that social and political pressure is mounting within the refugee community; and that they plan to send young men back to fight for their independence.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES UNIT 3

These activities are optional and require an additional commitment of time beyond the four hours that is proposed to complete this module.

## ON-THE-JOB ACTIVITY

- In the situation where you are working, or in a situation that you know very well, find out which critical threats are facing children and the numbers of children affected. Share a summary report with colleagues.

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### In Addition, Why Not…

1. Conduct a review of national laws to identify provisions that are available to protect children against the critical threats referenced in this unit.

2. Review the monitoring and reporting mechanisms that are in place aimed at identifying abuses.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

You will find the following information on the ARC CD-ROM:

**ARC Foundations:**

- International Legal Standards – outlines the legal foundations for the protection of children affected by armed conflict and displacement.

- Child and Adolescent Development - explores the needs and capacities of children, including adolescents, and illustrates how armed conflict and displacement are likely to have a serious impact on child development.

**ARC Critical Issues:**

- Separated Children – covers the issues facing separated children, in particular the prevention of separation, interim care arrangements and family tracing issues, and the need for close inter-agency collaboration.

- Abuse and Exploitation - examines how refugee and displaced children may be at increased risk, explores preventive strategies, and considers how to respond when children are abused or exploited.

- Child Soldiers - focuses on measures to prevent recruitment, as well as appropriate procedures for demobilisation.

**Reference Material:**

- Machel Study (UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children)

## Introductory Training Module

# Unit 4
# Promoting Healthy Child Development

**KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *A wide range of interventions promote child development by restoring a sense of normality in children's lives and by preventing further harm.*

- *Programmes should build on the strengths and capacities of young people and advocate for their rights.*

All children, including adolescents, face threats to their development and well-being in situations of armed conflict and displacement. A combination of strengthening supportive networks and avoiding further harm may be the most effective way of enabling children and their families to cope with adverse circumstances.

**RESTORING A SENSE OF NORMALITY**

A wide range of interventions can help promote child development and restore a sense of normality. In this section, we will look at some of the main areas for programming.

**1. Restoring Community Structures**

Armed conflict, and especially the experience of flight and displacement, is enormously disruptive to children's lives. It brings massive change, often involving significant loss, and can seriously alter the child's life course and sense of purpose and direction. Displacement undermines the social networks and institutions (family, school, religious organisation, community etc.) which support normal development, and provide emotional security and the relationships that support children's learning and their sense of self and identity. Interventions which help restore previous social structures, which facilitate the setting-up of new and adaptive structures, and which strengthen the capacity of existing social networks are most likely to yield positive impact for children's protection and development.

> For more information see the ARC Resource Pack **Community Mobilisation** Topics 3, 5, 6.

## 2. Restoring a Structure, Routine and Purpose to Daily Life

Daily structured activities - including play and recreation, informal and formal school, and where appropriate work - 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. 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 play);

- appropriate sports activities for girls and boys;

- traditional music, songs, dance, theatre, story-telling and familiar festivals;

- schooling - formal and/or non-formal as appropriate, and vocational training;

- key health, sanitation, nutrition and safety messages;

- training in conflict resolution skills such as communication and negotiation.

The importance of gender issues needs to be considered at all times. In some contexts, girls are much less likely to have opportunities to, for example, attend school or take part in other social activities.


## 3. Promoting Family Life and Parental Competence

One of the most important contributions that can be made to improve children's well-being is to help the adults in the family to re-build a sense of effectiveness as parents. Very often, parental capacity is affected by reactions to stressful events, such as depression or anxiety, that can limit their responsiveness to their children.

A wide range of different approaches can have an impact on the well-being of parents, and especially mothers: from appropriate and accessible health services to economic activities; from educational opportunities to cultural and recreational activities. Some programmes may specifically aim at enhancing parental competence (e.g. parenting education): others attempt more generally to improve the quality of life and opportunities for the development of men and women. An emphasis on the *empowerment* of women may be especially significant.

It is particularly important to promote family-based care and family tracing for children who have been separated from their parents or previous carers.

> A national NGO, in collaboration with an international NGO, persuaded Rwandan authorities to allow women in prison to place their children with extended family outside of the prison. The establishment of a policy on regular return visits to their mothers helped maintain attachment between mother and child during the separation. For the children who remained with their mothers in prison, a stimulation programme was organised.

## 4. Building on the Strengths and Capacities of Young People

While it is true that children may have particular areas of vulnerability, it is important not to overlook their own capacity for active engagement in the issues affecting them. Emphasis should be placed on children as agents in their own development. While it may not have been possible to influence the events that disrupted development, young people may have a key role to play in re-building their lives with facilitation appropriate to their ages and capacities. The capacities of children and adolescents are seldom fully appreciated.

As well as being an important legal right, child participation can promote child and adolescent development by bringing a structure and sense of purpose to children's lives. Clarity of objectives and methods, a careful consideration of issues of culture, gender and age, and a real commitment by the adults involved will greatly facilitate effective implementation of this important principle.

For more information see the ARC Resource Pack **Community Mobilisation,** Topic 7.

## 5. Education

The right to education is an absolute right of all children, in all countries and in all situations, and should be protected no matter what their circumstances.

Education protects and promotes the physical and psycho-social well-being of children. For children, including adolescents, affected by armed conflict, establishing learning opportunities as soon as possible is of major importance in order for the children to not be doubly victimised. It is also one of the most important means of restoring a sense of normality for children and their communities, and can contribute to overcoming psychological trauma that many may have experienced.

In most communities, the school is the public service structure which reaches the largest number of children. Education has a direct protection function in monitoring the development and progress of children. Monitoring is equally important for children at risk of military recruitment or exploitation, or for separated children in foster care. If these children are in school or taking part in organised, structured activities where their attendance or absence is noted, they are much less likely to be vulnerable to abuse of all kinds.

A group of Sri Lankan children who had lost one or both parents in the civil war were refused entry to primary school because they had no birth certificate, and insufficient money to pay the high fee demanded to obtain one. An international NGO working in the country brought the facts to the notice of the National Child Rights Coalition who took the matter up with the education authorities. The children received their birth certificates and were able to attend school.

## 6. Monitoring Abuses and Reporting

It is essential that monitoring, documentation and reporting of all critical threats to children is undertaken. It helps to create an understanding of how problems are manifesting themselves in a particular community, locality or country, and can inform responses to abuses. For the monitoring to be most effective the community itself will be involved. Children, parents and community must be fully aware of their rights which may require specific action on the part of agencies to ensure such information is widely disseminated.

In the case of sexual violence, a lack of reporting and documentation on issues of sexual abuse and exploitation increases the vulnerability of children to suffer from sexual violence. Owing to a fear of retaliation, embarrassment, ignorance, shame and ostracism, many victims and their families do not report incidents of sexual assault or exploitation. This makes it increasingly difficult to protect children, provide support and rehabilitation for the victims, and prevent such abuses from continuing.

It is important to have child-friendly, visible and widely publicised reporting mechanisms run by knowledgeable and sensitive staff.

## 7. Advocacy for Children's Rights and Needs

Promoting child and adolescent development requires careful examination of the intersection between important child protection and child development issues, and critical legal and policy matters. When deciding how to respond on a broader advocacy level, responses, depending on the circumstances, could include:

- direct contacts with local authorities (health and welfare services, police, military officials, local government);

- supporting local organisations (such as local human rights groups, families, teachers, health workers, church or community leaders);

- use of the media;

- high level representations from humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF or OHCHR;

- providing information to international non-governmental organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Save the Children Alliance.

However, any response must be carefully thought through and planned as often the issues to be addressed are very sensitive and often 'hidden'.

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In a camp in South East Asia, adolescents who had violated camp regulations were routinely placed in the camp stockade or jail. They were not separated from adult inmates and were subjected to both exploitation and abuse. In an extreme case, despite the protests of a refugee worker, one refugee youth was removed from the camp and placed in the local jail. Again, he was not segregated from adult inmates and upon his eventual return to the camp, medical examination revealed that he had been repeatedly sexually abused. This extreme situation prompted another review of the camp's detention policy, and ultimately the camp authorities accepted the responsibility for dealing with disciplinary matters for youth within the confines of the camp and in consultation with the child-focused agencies who were operating there.

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## PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM FURTHER HARM

Unfortunately it is not uncommon for interventions intended to assist children and families to actually make matters worse. The following are examples to be avoided.

### Further and Unnecessary Separations

Unintended separations can easily result from policies such as opening residential centres, careless documentation when children or their parents are admitted to hospital or feeding centres, or the poorly-organised evacuation of children and families from dangerous areas.

> For more information see the ARC Resource Pack, **Separated Children** Topic 2.

### Inappropriate "Trauma" Programmes

Exploring sensitive issues and the meaning they hold for a child can be important to the process of healing and recovery: but requires expertise in therapies appropriate to the context, and should take place in a stable, supportive environment with the participation of care-givers who have a solid and continuing relationship with the child.

In-depth clinical interviews intended to awake the memories and feelings associated with the child's worst moments may be very harmful, especially if conducted with an unprepared child by a stranger with limited knowledge of the culture. This kind of interview risks tearing down a vulnerable child's defences and leaving him/her in a worse state of pain and agitation than before. For a child in a stressful and unsafe situation, it may be a good coping strategy to avoid recalling traumatic experiences.

> For more information see the ARC Resource Pack **Working with Children**, Topics 3, 4, 5.

### Inappropriate Isolation of "Vulnerable Groups"

Actions to address the needs of 'vulnerable groups' of children should ensure their long-term reintegration into their communities and avoid short-term assistance that may increase their marginalisation. Institutionalisation, for example, frequently results in further marginalisation and alienation from the wider society. Targeting separated children, orphans, and former child soldiers for special material assistance may be motivated by the desire to assist 'vulnerable groups', but may inadvertently heighten the potential for stigmatisation and conflict, especially in situations where materials are scarce. Similarly, isolating "psychological trauma" from the other difficult and stressful aspects of the lives of children and offering a de-contextualised form of "treatment" can label children inappropriately, isolate them from their peers, and ignore current aspects of children's lives which are creating difficulties.

> With support from an international NGO, a life-skills building programme was established through a local community association in a rural village in one of Mozambique's northern provinces. The programme included basic numeracy and literacy, recreation, access to viable trade skills and mentoring relationships with adult role models. The programme was opened to a wide range of economically marginalised adolescents, including those who had been internally displaced, were among returning refugees, original local residents and, recently demobilised child soldiers. As the long-term goal was to promote genuine reintegration into the local community, special programmes were not established for particular subgroups such as former child soldiers or unaccompanied children. There was a conscious attempt within the programme to address common problems and issues with support being reflective of individual needs, rather than being tied to membership of a special sub-group. Recreation programmes and cultural activities were also designed to be inclusive.

### Further Victimisation of Victims

One of the most extreme examples of the need to protect children from further harm comes from insensitive responses to allegations of abuse and exploitation. It is distressingly common to find that children who have been sexually abused or exploited are not believed, or that they are blamed or even punished for the incident, and as a consequence experience not just a complete breakdown in trust in the adult world, but further marginalisation.

As indicated above, inappropriate and insensitive clinical interviewing of traumatised children can also inflict serious secondary trauma.

Introductory Training Module
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# Unit Four Activity

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## OBJECTIVES

By the end of this activity, you will be able to:

- identify some of the protective factors that are provided to children by an education programme.

## TIMEFRAME

30 minutes

## METHOD

Please read the extract below, taken from the Machel Study, before responding to the question below. The paper reviews some of the difficulties that could be experienced in maintaining an effective education system in an emergency setting but also highlights the importance of meeting children's educational needs.

## Background Reading

Taken from: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN
Impact of armed conflict on children
Note by the Secretary-General, 1996 (often referred to as the Machel Study)

**1. Risks to education during conflict**

186. Schools are targeted during war, in part because they have such high profiles. In rural areas, the school building may be the only substantial permanent structure, making it highly susceptible to shelling, closure or looting. In Mozambique, for example, a study prepared for the present report estimated that 45 per cent of primary school networks were destroyed. Often, local teachers are also prime targets because they are important community members and tend to be more than usually politicized. According to the above-mentioned study, during the crisis in Rwanda, more than two-thirds of teachers either fled or were killed. The destruction of educational infrastructures represents one of the greatest developmental setbacks for countries affected by conflict. Years of lost schooling and vocational skills will take equivalent years to replace and their absence imposes a greater vulnerability on the ability of societies to recover after war.

187. Formal education is also generally at risk during war because it relies on consistent funding and administrative support that is difficult to sustain during political turmoil. During the fighting in Somalia and under the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, public expenditure on education was reduced to nearly nothing.

188. It is less difficult to maintain educational services during low-intensity conflicts, as in Sri Lanka and Peru, and schooling is likely to continue during periodic lulls in countries where fighting is intermittent or seasonal. Even where services are maintained, however, education will be of lower quality. Funds will be short and the supply of materials slow or erratic. In addition, fear and disruption make it difficult to create an atmosphere conducive to learning and the morale of both teachers and pupils is likely to be low. Studies in Palestinian schools reported that teachers and students had difficulty concentrating, particularly if they had witnessed or experienced violence or had family members in prison or in hiding. Teachers are also exposed to political pressure: in

Kurdish areas in Turkey, for example, teachers have been threatened by non-state forces for continuing to teach the Turkish curriculum. In some countries, teachers have been forced to inform on students and their families. Teachers who go for long periods without salaries are more susceptible to corruption.

**2. Challenges and opportunities**

189. Though still inadequate, relief programmes direct most attention in times of armed conflict to the education of refugee children. This is partly because, when children are massed together in camps, there are economies of scale and it is easier to approximate a classroom situation. In some countries, this reality simply reflects the dominance of inflexible formal education systems that persist despite growing doubts about their quality, relevance and content. Insufficient attention to the education needs of non-refugees during armed conflict is also attributable to the fact that some of the donors most active during conflicts are constrained by their mandates to work exclusively with refugees. Other donors have been reluctant to use emergency funds for what they have chosen to interpret as long-term development activities.

190. The education needs of children remaining within conflict zones must be met. The expert calls, therefore, for educational activity to be established as a priority component of all humanitarian assistance. Educational administrators who wish to ensure continuity must, when possible, collaborate closely with local political and military authorities and be assured of considerable support from a wide range of community groups and NGOs. Indeed, where public sector agencies are absent or severely weakened, such groups may provide the only viable institutional frameworks….

## Question

As already mentioned, effective education programmes can offer a series of protective factors for children who have been affected by armed conflict and displacement. Within this unit we have already referred to a number of factors directly, including:

- Protecting and promoting the physical and psycho-social well-being of children.

- Restoring a sense of normality for children and their communities.

- Education has a direct protection function in monitoring the development and progress of children, as well as risk factors associated with the situation.

Consider the reading above, and the situation that you are currently working in, and identify and list other protective or positive factors that an effective education programme can provide.

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES UNIT 4**

These activities are optional and require an additional commitment of time beyond the four hours that is proposed to complete this module.

**ON-THE-JOB ACTIVITY**

- Conduct a review of the current programme that you are working on, or one that you know well, to see which of the elements mentioned in this unit you find reflected.

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**In Addition, Why Not…**

With colleagues, consider additional elements that could be developed within existing programmes to support child protection.

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

You will find the following information on the ARC CD-ROM:

**ARC Foundations:**

- Child and Adolescent Development - explores the needs and capacities of children, including adolescents, and considers the importance of integrating both a child rights and child development perspective into programme planning.

- Community Mobilisation - looks at the importance of community structures for children's development, and examines the factors which help decision-making about reestablishing previous community structures and facilitating the setting up of new ones.

**Critical Issues:**

- Education - stresses the importance of promptly and efficiently setting up educational activities in emergency situations.

**Reference Material:**

- Machel Study (UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children).

## Introductory Training Module

# Concluding Remarks and Quiz

**Congratulations**, you have now completed the self-study module! You have looked at the legal framework that exists for child protection and how this relates to programme activities that respond directly to the key concerns of children affected by armed conflict. A next step forward for you could be to identify specific issues that are directly affecting children where you are working and refer to other ARC resource packs for further information. An alternative next step, depending on your particular focus, could be to explore the child rights programming approach. A useful reference in this case is the Save the Children Child Rights Programming Handbook included on the ARC CD-ROM in the reference material section.

Take a little time now to reflect on the learning objectives that were set out in the introduction by completing the review form at the back of the module. Your comments and feedback would be most appreciated by the project and, as such, you are kindly requested to forward a copy of the completed form to the Project Co-ordinator based in Geneva (address and e-mail appear on the back cover of this module).

A quiz is also proposed below, to allow you to reflect on your own learning and identify areas that you may wish to revisit.

Thank you for taking the time to work through this module. We hope you have found it useful and informative. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you believe the ARC project could be of further assistance.

> Organisations adopt a rights-based approach to programming not only because they believe that it is morally right but also because they think it brings a number of benefits to traditional approaches to work.
> These benefits include:
>
> - Providing a long-term goal to which all work is directed and a set of standards to measure progress against this goal.
> - Creating goals and standards, clearly set out in an international legal framework, which are shared by governments, donors and civil society.
> - Identifying the responsibilities of governments, donors, private sector, communities and individuals to bind them to action and accountability.
> - Incorporating what is widely regarded as "good development practice" (i.e. a focus on participation, equity, sustainability, non-discrimination, poverty eradication and mutli-sectoral working) into one overall holistic approach.

**QUIZ**

This quiz is aimed at providing you with a tool for self assessment. If the questions flag areas for you that you think you haven't fully absorbed or understood, go back and look over the materials again. The quiz is not meant to be a test of participants and shouldn't be used as such by facilitators of group learning - it does however provide a useful, if informal, means of assessing how participants have responded to the module.

**Unit 1**

1.  Who has the primary responsibility of protecting the human rights of all persons within a particular territory?

2.  How does the CRC define a child?

3.  Which Articles in the CRC provide for the specific protection of refugee children and children in situations of armed conflict?

4.  List the four guiding principles of the CRC.

5.  What are the areas of concern addressed by the two recently adopted optional protocols to the CRC?

**Unit 2**

1.  List four of the general factors affecting child development in conflict and displacement situations.

2.  As children and adolescents are **not** a homogenous group, list some of the differences that can have implications for any given situation.

3.  Name the four broadly defined stages of the programme cycle.

4.  What does the term "resilience" mean when referring to children?

5.  What are the two key elements of strategies aimed at enhancing resilience?

**Unit 3**

1.  List the four main critical threats faced by children affected by armed conflict.

2.  What might be some of the effects that experiences of violence and fear could have on children?

3.  What term would you use to describe a child who is totally alone?

4.  How does child abuse differ from child neglect?

5.  Below what age does the CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict require States to ensure that no-one takes part in hostilities or is forcibly recruited?

**Unit 4**

1.  List some of the activities that could contribute to restoring a sense of normality.

2.  Why is it important to restore structure, routine and purpose to the lives of children and adolescents affected by armed conflict or displacement?

3.  What types of activities could contribute to this?

4.  Apart from Education being an absolute right of all children, what protective factors does it offer children affected by armed conflict?
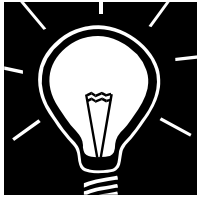
5.  List some of the activities that could contribute to protecting children from further harm.

# Introductory Training Module

## Answers / Feedback to the Unit Activities and Quiz

**Unit 1 Activity**

Many of the Articles could fall within more than one cluster. Below are some examples of Articles that reflect each cluster. More information on how these clusters reflect actual protection and assistance activities on behalf of refugee and displaced children are listed in the ARC International Legal Standards resource pack, Topic 2 (Pg. 20):

Protection: Article 11, Article 19, Article 20, Article 22, Article 34, Article 38

Development: Article 17, Article 18, Article 24, Article 27, Article 28, Article 31

Participation: Article 8, Article 12, Article 13, Article 14, Article 15, Article 16

**Unit 2 Activity**

Refer to the ARC Resource Pack Child and Adolescent Development Topic 3 (Pg. 17) for a series of risk and protective factors that are listed in relation to both children and their parents.

**Unit 3 Activity**

Often a series of complex factors have to reconciled when assessing the situation of children and identifying solutions that meet their best interests. The case study highlights some of the dilemmas and also demonstrates the need for gathering information from a variety of sources.

There is no one absolute solution but check to see whether any of the following ideas appeared in your briefing note.

1. The boy returns to his father - monitoring and support mechanisms have been explored and are in place to support the child. The boy confirmed a wish to return (article 12). However, is this solution really in the best interests of the child (article 3) and there is a question as to whether the father's direction and guidance can be considered appropriate under the circumstances (article 5). Parents are to fulfil their parental responsibilities considering the child's best interests as a primary concern. An important detail to clarify is whether the child has received all of the available information regarding the situation and options (article 17).

2. The child joins the rest of the family who are in the third country. If the boy decided to explore this option, States are to deal with applications that promote family reunification in a positive, humane and expeditious manner (article 10). States are to use their best efforts to ensure that parents have joint or common responsibilities for the up-bringing and development of the child.

**Unit 4 Activity**

Additional ideas appear in the ARC Resource Pack Education Topic 2 (Pg. 17) and include: promoting literacy, developing options, enhancing children's understanding of events, providing avenues for expression of feelings, providing a broader education for children, a vehicle for community mobilisation, promoting reconciliation, restoring playfulness.

**ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ**

**Unit 1**

1. States have the primary responsibility of protecting the human rights of all persons within their territories.

2. The CRC defines a "child" as everyone under 18 years of age "unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (Article 1).

3. Articles 22 and 38 respectively.

4. Non-discrimination, Best interests of the child, Life, survival and development, and Participation.

5. The Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

**Unit 2**

1. Possible responses include: Wholesale loss, Lack of health services, clean water and adequate sanitation, Chronic poor health, Malnutrition, Physical injuries, Loss of educational opportunities and Lack of opportunities for play.

2. Gender, age, maturity, social class or caste, cultural or religious background must all be considered.

3. Situation analysis, Priority setting, Implementation strategy, Monitoring and evaluation.

4. The term "resilience", when applied to children, describes the capacity of the child to "bounce back" after difficult or stressful experiences.

5. Reducing Risk Factors and Strengthening Protective Factors

**Unit 3**

1. Experiences of violence and fear, Separation from parents or other carers, Abuse and exploitation, and Children's involvement in fighting forces.

2. Young children may lose (usually temporarily) developmental gains such as speech or control of bladder and bowel. Disturbances in sleep and eating habits are also common. The apparent loss of capacity to play is sometimes observed, or children become preoccupied with themes of violence and death in their play and drawing. During the adolescent period, exposure to violent and frightening experiences can have a particularly pronounced effect. Their capacity for learning and for forming relationships can be disturbed. In some cases, faced perhaps with the loss of educational opportunities and a disturbed developmental life-course, many adolescents may come to sense a lack of meaning in life and future prospects. Criminal activity with peers, drug

and substance abuse, and other forms of anti-social behaviour may represent a form of meaning as well as an outlet for deep frustration.

3. Unaccompanied Child.

4. **Child abuse** is generally used to describe an act of **commission** that is outside of accepted cultural norms. **Child neglect** is rather an act of **omission**, the failure to provide for the child's basic needs.

5. Eighteen years of age.

**Unit 4**

1. Restoring community structures, Restoring a structure, routine, and purpose to daily life, Promoting family life and parental competence, Building on the strengths and capacities of young people, Education, Monitoring abuses and reporting, Advocacy for children's rights and needs.

2. Structure in daily life conveys a sense of purpose and dependability that can be a calming and stabilising. It also engenders feelings of responsibility and respect for other people.

3. Organised play (and safe spaces for play), Appropriate sports activities for girls and boys, Traditional music, songs, dance, theatre, story-telling and familiar festivals, Schooling - formal and/or non-formal as appropriate, and vocational training, Key health, sanitation, nutrition and safety messages, Training in conflict resolution skills such as communication and negotiation.

4. Education acts to protect and promote the physical and psycho-social well-being of children. It is an important means of restoring a sense of normality for children and communities, and can contribute to overcoming psychological trauma. Education has a direct protection function in monitoring children.

5. Avoid the following: further and unnecessary separations, inappropriate trauma programmes, inappropriate isolation of "vulnerable groups", further victimisation of victims.

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## <u>Feedback Form</u>

Please rate your response to the following questions and circle the appropriate number. We would also be pleased to receive any comments that you may have that could help us in developing this module in the future.

| Review of Objectives | Low | | | | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective 1:** You will be able to define the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its place within the broader legal framework | | | | | |
| Was the objective met? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How relevant do you find the objective to your own work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Objective 2:** You will be able to assess the types of threat that may be faced by children affected by armed conflict | | | | | |
| Was the objective met? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How relevant do you find the objective to your own work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Objective 3:** You will be able to consider those activities that are likely to contribute to enhanced child protection | | | | | |
| Was the objective met? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How relevant do you find the objective to your own work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Objective 4:** You will be able to use the ARC CD-ROM to locate more information on child rights | | | | | |
| Was the objective met? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How relevant do you find the objective to your own work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Review of the Module Overall | Low | | | | High |
| How appropriate was the level of the materials to your needs? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Was the presentation of materials clear and easy to follow? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Did you find the activities helpful in developing your learning? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Was the proposed time required for the module adequate? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Would you recommend the module to your colleagues? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Please provide any additional comments here: | | | | | |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Please return it to the Project Co-ordinator by e-mail or post (see the back of the module for details).