Children in War: Victims and Aggressors

Introduction

Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa said, "We must not close our eyes to the fact that child soldiers are both victims and perpetrators. They sometimes carry out the most barbaric acts of violence. But no matter what the child is guilty of, the main responsibility lies with us, the adults. There is simply no excuse, no acceptable argument for arming children." We can refuse to excuse the inexcusable but at the same time we must be aware that children are actively recruited or conscripted into combatant roles worldwide. According to UNICEF, in just one decade two million children have been killed, up to five million have been disabled, 12 million made homeless, 300 000 forced to fight, one million orphaned or separated from families, and 10 million have been psychologically traumatized. As individual Canadians, how can we begin to deal with a problem of such immense proportions? What we can do, at least initially, is to listen.

Critics claim that while millions of children must endure unspeakable suffering, the developed nations of the world have done little to alleviate it. Competing political agendas, apathy, and economic interests involving the arms industry have stalled efforts to end many of the world's regional conflicts. Worse still, the end of the Cold War saw a flood of surplus small arms enter the world's markets both legitimate and underground. The sheer volume of weapons makes monitoring and reduction extremely difficult and decreases the chances of peaceful resolutions.

One step toward reducing the harmful effects of conflict on children was taken in September 2000 when Canada hosted the International Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg. The conference brought together government representatives, humanitarian aid agencies, and youth delegates to share information and draft initiatives and goals. The conference created opportunities for government officials to hear expert research and personal accounts about children and war. It also served as a high-profile forum for the aid agencies to spread their messages to the general public via the media covering the event. The stories and photographs put human faces on the cold, grim statistics, galvanizing and even embarrassing the assembled nations, pushing them to act decisively in order to begin to effectively resolve the problem. Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced during the conference that Canada helped broker a deal that would free 16 abducted children in southern Sudan. It was hoped that the children would be the first of thousands released from the clutches of military groups in Sudan and Uganda.

The deal was acknowledged but not universally praised. With inadequate monitoring or sanctions in place, international treaties to reduce weapons or conflict have been ignored before. Even more distressing are reports by research groups and humanitarian agencies that indicate clearly that children affected by war need far more than their freedom. The psychological trauma of conflict and the indoctrination processes practised by many military organizations make it difficult to reintegrate the children into normal society. However, the Winnipeg Conference represents a small step in the right direction. Perhaps we have begun to really listen.
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“Rwanda: The Crisis and the Challenge,” September 1994
“Central Africa: Canada Tries to Help,” February 1997
“Zimbabwe: Who Owns It; Who Runs It?” September 2000

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Listening

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Reflecting the simple wisdom of many religious texts, this often-cited quotation from the Bible was meant as a reminder that children who have received humane care and instruction become healthy, responsible, and caring adults. Unfortunately, millions of children are deliberately targeted for abuse, terror or participation in military actions; they are treated inhumanely. The negative effects of the "training" they receive as children can be irreversible, producing adults that see violence as a normal solution to problems. This kind of brutal treatment of children poses a greater disruption in society in general because it diminishes the ability of a community to function productively and cohesively. It should be noted that even after hostilities cease, victims and aggressors both suffer the consequences, becoming fearful or vengeful, less able to integrate successfully and function co-operatively in the community.

The disruption of education during a conflict, the disorganization or destruction of the economy, and the absence of positive role models deprives children in conflict zones of opportunities to develop personal skills that contribute to their individual sense of well-being and consequently to the well-being of the community.

In the early part of 2000 the United Nations drafted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts. This proposal recommended 18 as the minimum age for compulsory military recruitment and 16 as the age for voluntary enlistment. Canada adopted the Optional Protocol in June 2000, amending the National Defence Act to comply with those restrictions. This standard, however, does not apply in the 155 or more regional conflicts currently being fought around the world.

One example highlighted at the Winnipeg Conference was the situation in Sierra Leone. Half of its population of five million has been driven from their homes. Almost 3000 children between the ages of eight and 14 have been forced to serve as soldiers, child labourers, or sex slaves, mostly for the Revolutionary United Front rebel army. One 16-year-old teenager who was forced to fight on both sides in the conflict said this from a repatriation compound, "I feel angry. They are not supposed to do what they were doing and are still doing now. Children are supposed to go to school and learn good behaviour, but here in Sierra Leone there is nowhere you could find a child who did not experience the war."

Careful and Compassionate Viewing

1. Before watching this News in Review report, brainstorm a list of the things that children should have in order to be happy, safe, and prepared for adulthood. Then discuss how war has a direct effect on the elements you have listed.

2. During viewing, listen carefully to the stories of these children. Children like these have been victimized and/or have committed atrocities. Many of them are trying to forget and to forgive. What are they trying to forget? Whom are they trying to forgive? How can your active listening be a part of the forgiveness process?
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Children's Voices

The stories told by children who have survived violent conflict are appalling and, at the same time, emotionally compelling. One of the effects of witnessing life experiences that are in sharp contrast to our own is that one can gain a renewed appreciation for one's own situation, in our case a greater appreciation for the stable and productive environment that most Canadians experience as children.

It goes without saying that the first step in helping a child who has been severely traumatized is to remove him or her from the conflict situation and allow the child to experience an environment that reinforces the child's conscious and subconscious awareness of a better way of life. Part of the repatriation process of child victims of war is for aid workers to listen carefully and through caring and silent acceptance of the child to encourage him or her to express the experiences in the most appropriate way (to the child) as possible, often through drawings and the telling of stories. "Listen" to the accounts of such children. The excerpts below are from the Human Rights Watch Web site (www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/voices.htm). This non-governmental organization (NGO) was present at the Winnipeg Conference.

Listening and Hearing

The accounts of these children are honest, quite factual, and disturbing. They are based on their personal experiences. Suggest what each is really telling us about the experiences they underwent. How do their simple but troubling statements make us understand a little bit more their suffering?

"One boy tried to escape [from the rebels], but he was caught . . . His hands were tied, and then they made us, the other new captives, kill him with a stick. I felt sick. I knew this boy from before. We were from the same village. I refused to kill him and they told me they would shoot me. They pointed a gun at me, so I had to do it. The boy was asking me, "Why are you doing this?" I said I had no choice. After we killed him, they made us smear his blood on our arms. . . . They said we had to do this so we would not fear death and so we would not try to escape. . . . I still dream about the boy from my village who I killed. I see him in my dreams, and he is talking to me and saying I killed him for nothing, and I am crying."

— Susan, 16, was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. Her statement comes from an interview conducted by Human Rights Watch in Gulu, Uganda.

"The army was a nightmare. We suffered greatly from the cruel treatment we received. We were constantly beaten, mostly for no reason at all, just to keep us in a state of terror. I still have a scar on my lip and sharp pains in my stomach from being brutally kicked by the older soldiers. The food was scarce, and they made us walk with heavy loads, much too heavy for our small and malnourished bodies. They forced me to learn how to fight the enemy, in a war that I didn't understand why it was being fought." Emilio was recruited by the Guatemalan army at age 14. His testimony was given at a U.S. Congressional briefing on child soldiers in Washington DC, on December 3, 1997, and was sponsored by Human Rights Watch.

"I was in the front lines the whole time I was with the [opposition forces]. I used to be assigned to plant mines in areas the enemy passed through. They used us for reconnaissance and other things like that because if you're a child the enemy doesn't notice you much; nor do the villagers." This is a statement by a former child soldier from Burma/Myanmar as quoted in

"They beat all the people there, old and young, they killed them all, nearly 10 people . . . like dogs they killed them. . . . I didn't kill anyone, but I saw them killing . . . the children who were with them killed too . . . with weapons . . . they made us drink the blood of people, we took blood from the dead into a bowl and they made us drink . . . then when they killed the people they made us eat their liver, their heart, which they took out and sliced and fried . . . And they made us little ones eat." This Peruvian woman was recruited by the Shining Path at age 11. Her statement was reported in a July 1997 article, "The Invisible Soldiers: Child Combatants," from the publication The Defense Monitor of the Center for Defense Information.

Follow-up Activity

Have you ever had the feeling that even though someone appears to be listening to you, they really don't hear what you are saying?

1. Discuss what the essential difference may be between listening and hearing. Are there different ways of listening? Can you listen without really hearing? To what extent may we hear someone talking even though we aren't really listening? How does one listen carefully to what a person is saying? If we listen carefully to what a person is saying, how do we then process or interpret what they have heard?
2. Why is active listening so important when someone in distress is talking? How does our simple act of listening well send a positive message to that person?
3. Throughout the history of psychiatry and psychological counselling, talking therapies, as opposed, for example, to drug therapy, have always been and continue to be considered effective. Suggest the various forms of talking therapies that we encounter in our everyday lives that are not necessarily in a medical or psychological treatment setting. What is the importance of being a good listener in such situations?
4. Why is it important to have listened to and heard the individuals quoted above?

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The Canadian Approach

Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, plans to retire from politics before the next federal election. The Winnipeg Conference represents his last major initiative after four and half years as the federal minister responsible for our foreign policy. His performance during the weeks leading up to and including the conference demonstrated both the Canadian mediation style of diplomacy and his particular skills in achieving a contentious agreement.

Axworthy was criticized early for including in the Winnipeg Conference the foreign ministers of countries where human rights violations have occurred. The focus by many critics was the inclusion of Ismail Osman, the Sudanese Foreign Minister. Sudan has been accused of allowing children kidnapped from northern Uganda to be trained as soldiers in southern Sudan. As many as 14 000 children have been taken. Albino Allam, a refugee and the chairman of the Manitoba Sudanese Association, said that Sudan and Uganda have not honoured an agreement signed at the summit last year in Kenya to release the children. For its part, the Sudanese government threatened to boycott the conference because it felt unfairly singled out. An agreement did not seem possible given this tense atmosphere. Axworthy, however, defended the inclusion of Sudan noting that all parties were needed to properly address the issues. He took a chance that the nations in question would feel more obliged to comply if they were included in the process. In his view, if they were absent then there would be no leverage at all.

For its part Canada agreed to pay the expenses for the symbolic 16 children freed in Sudan to come to Canada for rehabilitation. The 16 are supposed to be followed by another 6000. Axworthy also announced that Canada would do the following:

- recruit and train Canadian children's rights experts to serve on United Nations peace missions
- pay for experts on children's issues for the staff of a new court set up to try crimes committed in the recent civil war in Sierra Leone
- give $100 000 to a network of aid agencies to report on violations of children's rights during war
- allocate $1-million to aiding freed Ugandan children
- provide, in total, $30-million in aid.

Discussion

One of the speakers at the Conference was Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire, who was in command of the UN forces during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. He will return to Rwanda as an advisor to the federal government. In a scathing attack on Western governments and aid agencies, he accused them of using children to further their own goals. Dallaire said that governments and aid agencies have provided assistance based primarily on self-interest or where there is the most media attention. In your opinion, what are the implications and ramifications of Dallaire's accusation?
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Psychology and Warfare

In the June 2000 edition of Scientific American, Neil G. Boothby and Christine M. Knudsen noted that an estimated 300,000 children are currently participating in at least 36 conflicts worldwide. In some conflicts, such as the one in Sierra Leone, children aged seven to 14 comprise nearly 80 per cent of rebel soldiers. According to the non-governmental organization, Save the Children (www.savethechildren.org), one of every 200 children around the world, 10 million in all, have been psychologically affected by war. Canadians and others remote from armed conflicts and civil war tend to shudder in horror and disbelief at such statistics because in our culture childhood has come to be regarded as a time of innocence, a time for education, nurturing, and play. However, in many areas of the world the mere fact that children are innocent and vulnerable makes them prime targets for recruitment in war or terrorist activities.

The psychological effects of war are often overlooked even by governments and aid agencies seeking to alleviate the suffering of civilians caught in brutal conflicts. Statistics typically refer to numbers displaced, injured, or starving. However, the psychological effects of war may be more devastating to a society because emotional trauma is deep-seated and the effects last longer and are not as easily remedied as are food or medical shortages. According to a report by Evan Macosko in The Harvard International Review, the short-term psychological effects of trauma can induce stress, shock, autistic behaviour, aggression and a loss of self-esteem. A sad trend was noted in a survey of 500 Bosnian children taken during the siege of Sarajevo. Psychiatrist Syed Arshad Husain found that 92 per cent said they only wanted to be by themselves, 94 per cent thought that they were "ugly," and 90 per cent claimed that the terrible events surrounding them were their own fault.

Therefore, it is important to realize the long-term effects of war on children and consequently on society as a whole because severely traumatized children will one day be adults, and even in adulthood may continue to suffer personal dysfunction because of their childhood experiences. For example, children who have suffered the traumas of war are more likely to accept violence as a natural fact of life. The brutal treatment of family members and friends by armed authorities or rebels creates a predisposition toward revenge. Children who are victimized feel helpless in the face of violence directed at them. And what is worse, if they are recruited as soldiers and armed, they in effect are given permission to hit back at their enemies, thus creating what can become a life-long destructive behaviour pattern.

Another significant factor also has to be taken into account. The longer a child is exposed to conflict or the greater the degree of the atrocities, the less likely it will be that he or she will be motivated to learn how to resolve issues in their personal life and in their society peacefully. For example, researchers have found that Israeli and Palestinian children who have been exposed to long periods of chronic violence were "favourably inclined toward war and actively demonstrated their loyalty to their nation.

Discussion

1. Escalating of Defusing Behaviour?
Many of us recognize that dialogue, peaceful mediation strategies, and forgiveness are generally preferable to violent actions when seeking resolutions to problems. This is the philosophy at the heart of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Tribunal. However, our first response when we have been hurt or slighted often is to be aggressive and to take revenge.
As a class, think of recent events in Canadian society (or in your own community or school) where problems or disputes have occurred and where aggressive responses have been a first or common reaction. How did an aggressive or violent reaction only make the problem worse in these cases? For each event that is mentioned, suggest what, in your opinion, could have been the appropriate, rational reaction that would actually have defused the conflict. Why does this approach have greater long-term effects?

2. Mediation
In very serious conflicts, the parties involved may require outside agents to mediate the dispute. Outside agents may also play the role of peacemaker by creating a larger context that negates or defuses conflict. When it comes to protecting victims of conflict, a larger social context and a general agreement among "civilized" nations not to allow situations in which the victimization can occur can have important long-term effects. This strategy and mind-set was at the core of the Winnipeg Conference.

But it is easier said than done. Human beings have developed language for survival reasons but also as a creative tool. Often, however, our powers of language seem insufficient to the task at hand. As the French author Gustave Flaubert wrote in his novel Madame Bovary, "Human speech is like a cracked kettle on which we tap crude rhythms for bears to dance to, while we long to make music that will melt the stars." Why is language so important to this news story and this issue? How can language be used most effectively to ease the suffering of these children?

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Undoing the Wrong

Like many news stories, this one may seem impossible to "solve" for us as individuals. But it is important to note that we are not being asked to solve such an enormous wrongdoing but, in our own way, to be part of a process and to learn universal lessons from this tragic situation.

What We Should Know

It is important to know that undoing the damage created by violence and coercion is very difficult because it is often deeply internalized in the individual's psyche and the product of long conditioning. Children in war zones may be forced to join adult military units and be subjected to beatings, indoctrination, disfigurement and threats of death to keep them in line. Even where children have "voluntarily" enlisted, they are often too young to understand the ramifications of military actions. Children may be more vulnerable than adults because they may have lost their families, leaving them poorly equipped to care for themselves.

How can we promote positive, non-violent behaviour with children in our own society? Why is it important to recognize the innocence and vulnerability of children?

Child soldier recruits are often subjected to brutal treatment and forced to inflict pain or death on others in order to toughen them up. In the Renamo National Resistance Group in Mozambique, young boys were forced to witness executions of traitors. They were also forced to punish each other. One young boy described his experience this way, "When one of us was caught doing something, the bandits made him stand in front of us. They asked us what the boy had done wrong. The first one of us to answer correctly was brought forward, too. He was given a stick or a bayonet to punish the other boy. The rest of us were told to answer quickly next time or we'd be beaten, too."

We are often told that violence begets violence. This is not a difficult concept to understand. How do we teach young children who have not yet acquired a lot of language to understand, respect, and practise behaviour that defuses rather than escalates conflict?

In several areas around the world, children have been forced to commit atrocities in their own villages or even to murder members of their own families. This kind of atrocity at the heart of a community can break the community connections and the individual and collective spirit quickly and removes possible escape routes for reluctant recruits. As one Khmer Rouge leader put it: "It usually takes time, but the younger ones become the most effective soldiers of all." Re-integrating such child soldiers into normal society and into a specific community after such experiences can be immensely difficult. The length of time spent in military service is one important determinant. Neil Boothby, in his work with children in Mozambique, found that those captives who had spent more than a year with the rebels could not separate themselves psychologically from that group. They could explain to the aid workers that violence was wrong, but continued to use it as a principal means of coping with difficulties when interacting with people.

What does this tell us about the nature of ethical behaviour and the ability to conceptualize right and wrong? What does it also tell us about the power of negative behavioural conditioning on a child?
Insufficient research exists on child psychology during war. It is not known whether long-term child soldiers can successfully rejoin society. However, it is recognized that without efforts to reach out to them, they will be drawn to groups that reward their violence or cynicism. They may find outlets to their frustrations in the form of gangs or militias even after the initial conflict has ended.

In order for children who have suffered trauma, loss, separation, violence, and death to regain hope and a belief in the potential for human beings to be kind and caring, they must be exposed to individuals and groups that represent through word and deed that this is indeed possible. Such children must relearn trust. In your opinion, what organizations, groups, or individuals in our society (or your community) are best suited to this role?

**Follow-up Discussion**

For many of us, turning children into soldiers, is not only a betrayal of childhood but extreme antisocial behaviour. If we think of human behaviour as a continuum, what antisocial behaviour at the lower end of the scale do we need to recognize in our own communities? Can you think of situations or behaviour patterns in your school or community that need to be examined, talked about, or resolved before it is too late?

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A Case of "Physician Heal Thyself"

Canada has a reputation for peaceful and humanitarian intervention. For example, Canada has volunteered personnel for almost every peacekeeping operation since 1956, and the International Conference on War-Affected Children held in Winnipeg in September 2000 drew accolades for Canada's interest and initiatives in this area. Considering the praise and the noble nature of the conference, it was surprising therefore that Canada also drew criticism for its alleged naiveté and hypocritical actions. At the most basic level, Canada is guilty of breaking one of the central tenets proposed at the conference, which was to forbid the use of children under 18 as soldiers. Roy Mungoven, co-ordinator of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, noted that Canada allows the recruitment of under-18s, which puts them at risk of being placed in combat zones where Canada sends its military personnel. Axworthy has stated, however, that even though recruits may enter the Forces as young as 17, Canada's policy is not to send under-18s to areas where there is combat.

Canada was also accused by several different delegates at the conference of focusing on certain regional conflicts but ignoring others. Much of the attention at the conference was on the child soldiers in Uganda and Sudan. However, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, said at the conference that Canada and other Western countries are not doing enough to stop fundraising within their borders by rebel groups who recruit children as soldiers. The rebel group the Tamil Tigers raises money in Canada and intimidates Sri Lankan immigrants. The Toronto police department claims that members of "Tamil terrorist factions" are living in the Toronto area, extorting millions of dollars and terrorizing those who refuse to submit. Canada has signed an anti-terrorism convention that seeks to curb such activities. However, the Canadian immigration system has a massive backlog, and many individuals linked with organizations that use child soldiers slip in undetected. Critics maintain that Canada should be cleaning up its own house first before highlighting other nations' shortcomings.

Some critics say that Canada's initiatives may be well-intentioned but ultimately they ignore pragmatic realities. In an article in The National Post on September 16, critics were quoted suggesting that the Canadian delegation was simply promoting "paper exercises." They charge that the current plan by the nations attending the conference to phase out child soldiers has no real mechanisms for effecting change. There is no method for monitoring the ages of combatants or for punishing those who continue to ignore the convention's stipulations. A parallel was drawn by Douglas Bland, professor of Defence Management Studies at Queen's University, to the high-profile land-mines treaty signed in 1997. Many nations that signed the treaty continue to use land mines indiscriminately, and, with no policing mechanisms in place, have no reason to cease. However, Canada was instrumental in convincing 120 countries to sign the land-mines treaty. Like the land-mines agreement, the Winnipeg Convention establishes a moral standard that supporters say puts significant pressure on nations to conform to the principles, to act on them, and therefore to create a norm for a civilized world.

Inviting A Response

Based on what you now know of this issue, is Canada presenting a double standard? As a class, write a letter to your member of Parliament or directly to Lloyd Axworthy, the Minister of External Affairs, asking for a response to the criticism levelled against Canada. Students have at least three contact methods. Mail may be sent to the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy at: The
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Light Weaponry

The term light weapons refers to conventional arms that can be carried by an individual combatant. Weapons such as semi-automatic guns, light mortars, grenades or machine guns are now manufactured light enough to be carried and used by children, thus perpetuating the use of children as soldiers. According to a report to the non-governmental organization, the International Action Network on Small Arms (childhood, www.iansa.org/documents/research/res_archive/ngo4.htm#2), the international arms trade has made light weapons cheap and widely available. "[In Uganda] an AK-47 automatic rifle can be bought for the price of a chicken and in Northern Kenya for the price of a goat." Child soldiers in conflict zones throughout the world carry, maintain and use AK-47s or their equivalent.

Ironically, the reasons for this increase in small arms are related to the end of the Cold War. Governments have focused on nuclear arms limitation pacts, chemical weapons, and heavy conventional weapons. No agreements have been reached on light arms. With the easing of tensions between the large powers, the need to maintain mass armies has decreased. Many nations ended up with a massive surplus of weapons and ammunition. According to Paul Lansu, member of staff at the International Secretariat of Pax Christi in Brussels, Belgium, between 1990 and 1996 the United States gave away $7-billion worth of surplus weapons, including 200 000 machine guns. Other nations have also sold or given away their surplus, placing millions of weapons in circulation. It is estimated that there are 55 million AK-47s alone outside the original countries that owned them. These weapons are easy to trade or smuggle and almost impossible to control.

Many developed nations are directly complicit in this proliferation. In some cases they give away weapons to nations or groups whom they favour. In others the sale of arms maintains jobs in the arms industry or represents a quick source of cash. The industrialized nations of the world are not immune to the violence created by the millions of light weapons available. While most of these guns are used in conflicts in developing nations, many weapons have made their way into domestic markets, purchased by criminals. It is not rare for criminals to have more firepower than the police. There is a vested interest therefore in reducing and controlling the numbers of small arms. In 1995, former United Nations secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, launched an appeal for action in this area. Various non-governmental organizations continue to urge the registration, limitation, and destruction of small arms.

Discussion

1. This campaign to protect children who are caught in the middle of violent conflicts actually involves two interrelated campaigns: preventing the use of children as soldiers and controlling light weaponry throughout the world. What are the ramifications of this, given that some countries need money, and the arms industry provides it; or have a developing arms industry; or use the sale or donation of weapons to help friends and punish enemies?

2. With the spectre of recession or high unemployment always looming on the horizon, placing restrictions on any industry, even if it is weapons production, is a politically risky decision on the part of governments. How should they act in regard to small-arms control?
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The NGO Sphere of Influence

While many Canadians are not familiar with the term non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they are familiar with the names of many of these influential groups, for example, The International Red Cross and Red Crescent, Amnesty International, and UNICEF. Some Canadian organizations are Foster Parents Plan of Canada, World Vision, and Free the Children. NGOs work to raise national awareness on issues and contribute directly to development projects nationally or internationally. They gather and deliver information, and mobilize public and private support for global issues and programs. There are currently over 5000 NGOs working worldwide, with nearly 200 in Canada alone. The NGOs dedicated to humanitarian efforts try to raise money and resources to relieve suffering in various areas around the world. They also attempt to educate politicians so that they devise better foreign policies. Some NGOs also attempt to focus media attention on certain issues in order to pressure transgressing nations to rectify any abuses.

NGOs were key participants at the Winnipeg Conference. In fact, the conference was co-hosted by UNICEF as part of its "Global Movement for Children." NGOs too numerous to list also sent delegates to contribute their voices and to further the goals and findings of their organization. Two full days and several other blocks of time were dedicated to seminars and workshops led by the various NGOs. Their presence prevented the government representatives from ducking allegations or manoeuvring the conference for political gain. The NGOs, many of which have people working directly in the conflict zones, helped decide the group's policy direction. Their input is crucial in an area where few nations have the resources or the will to assess the scope of the problems or to get involved.

Hands-on Activities
1. Research the activities of an NGO with which you are familiar. What approaches or tactics do these organizations use? Why might they be better able to act on a problem such as child soldiers than a government? To whom are they accountable?
2. Choose either the NGO Free the Children or the NGO Save the Children. Examine its Web site and identify what the organization's mandate and activities are in terms of children. Free the Children (www.freethechildren.org) was founded by Canadian teenager Craig Kielberger. Save the Children (www.savethechildren.org) works directly in the field with children. For further information on NGOs represented at the Winnipeg Conference consult the conference's "Links Directory" at www.waraffectedchildren.gc.ca. Note that of the over 100 links, about half are NGOs or linked to NGOS. What is the significance of this?
Comprehensive News in Review Study Modules

Using both the print and non-print material from various issues of News in Review, teachers and students can create comprehensive, thematic modules that are excellent for research purposes, independent assignments, and small group study. We recommend the stories indicated below for the universal issues they represent and for the archival and historic material they contain.

"Civilians in War," March 1991
"Rwanda: The Crisis and the Challenge," September 1994
"Zimbabwe: Who Owns It; Who Runs It?" September 2000

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Let Freedom Ring
S.O.S. Children's Village
Children in War: Victims and Aggressors

Discussion, Research, and Essay Questions

1. The "Voices of Children" initiative encourages children to express their experiences in written or artistic forms in order to aid in the healing and repatriation process. Written excerpts were printed earlier in this report, but the artwork of children caught up in violent conflicts is especially poignant. Visit a Web site that features the stories or art of the children of war. The Winnipeg Conference Web site (www.waraffectedchildren.gc.ca) has a section called "Stories from the Field" plus links to most of the major humanitarian aid agencies. UNICEF also dedicates part of its site to the art of children of war as well as photographs and descriptions of children in war zones (www.unicef.org/voy/meeting/war/warhome.html). The American Friends Society recently featured therapeutic artwork from the children of Kosovo (www.afsc.org/ewnews/kosart.htm). Much more can be found with a search engine using the search terms children, art, and war. Review these sites and write a brief report about art as a medium for child therapy and rehabilitation.

2. When many of the world's conflicts occur, political interest elsewhere or media coverage can be limited. On the whole, Canadians tend to become more engaged when a conflict escalates to a massive scale, such as the 1995 genocide in Rwanda or when a conference such as the one in Winnipeg focuses our attention on a few graphic cases. Learn more about the conflicts that affect children so much. Write a report on a conflict that highlights the issues and reviews the causes. To identify potential topics, scan some of the non-governmental Web sites. One excellent site is The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (www.child-soldiers.org), which is a coalition of many NGOs, united by this one issue. It has country reports that provide statistics on population, the number of children in the country, the size of the military, and the nature of any ongoing conflicts.

3. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is a government agency with a broad mandate. In addition to projects that involve providing aid to children in zones of conflict, it also supports foreign aid projects in more than 100 of the poorest countries. Investigate what CIDA's mandate is and the activities it undertakes. Write an assessment of this group. How well is it performing? Should its mandate or activities be expanded?

4. You can get involved in helping to solve the issue of children in war in a number of ways. As an individual you can write letters to newspapers or federal politicians to voice your opinion on the issues you have explored by way of this News in Review program. Many humanitarian aid agencies also have organized writing campaigns, sponsorship programs, and relief activities. Find out if there are other interested individuals in your school or area who would like to form a club to raise awareness of these issues.
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