

*Children in Conflict: Monitoring and Reporting*  
Meeting Notes, December 1st, 2005

**Please note: The opinions expressed in WNCAC meetings and reflected in these notes are those of the individual participants and are not endorsed by the WNCAC, which provides an open forum for exchange among those concerned with children affected by armed conflict.**

The December meeting of the Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict focused on monitoring and reporting on violations of children's rights in war zones. Specifically, discussion focused on the UN Security Council Resolution 1612, which established a comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure the protection of children exposed to armed conflict.

The conversation was framed by *Julia Freedson* of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a network of international, national and local NGOs (<http://www.watchlist.org/>). The primary questions included: What are the implications for those working on these issues in Washington, DC? How might the Resolution impact program responses and diplomatic initiatives?

**Discussion Points:**

*What led to Security Council Resolution 1612?*

- There have been six resolutions related to children affected by armed conflict. Prior to Resolution 1612, Resolution 1539 asked the Secretary-General to develop an action plan on how the UN could build an effective and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism on six egregious violations of children's rights during armed conflict.
- Resolution 1539 called for the Secretary General to submit an action plan for a monitoring and reporting mechanism. In the lead up to the SG's report, UNICEF, OSRSG-CAC, and the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict all published action plans. Watchlist's paper can be accessed online at <http://www.watchlist.org/advocacy/policystatements/vacdac.pdf>. The Secretary-General's action plan, released on February 9, 2005, combined elements of all three proposals and is the basis for Resolution 1612. The report can be accessed online at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/sgrep05.htm>, click on S/2005/72.
- During the negotiations on resolution 1612, there was considerable debate within the Security Council over whether or not the new monitoring and reporting mechanism should apply only to countries on the agenda of the Security Council or should be global in scope. A compromise was reached, in which the

Resolution would be phased in, applied first to Burundi, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Somalia, and Sudan (all of which are in Annex 1, already under consideration by the Security Council). This will be followed by a review, after which implementation will be expanded to countries on Annex 2 (those which are not on the Security Council's agenda). Annex 2 includes Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.

- Resolution 1612 also resulted in an agreement to establish a new Security Council working group on children and armed conflict, which will receive reports from the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and would recommend targeted measures for the Security Council to take in response to violations to hold perpetrators accountable and to halt and prevent future violations. The Ambassador of France has agreed to chair the working group for one year. The Working Group includes representatives from all 15 members of the Security Council. The working group held its inaugural meeting in November. The full text of Resolution 1612 can be access online at [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc\\_resolutions05.htm](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions05.htm), click on S/RES/1612 (2005).

*Currently, what are key issues related to the development of the monitoring and reporting mechanism/implementation of 1612 identified by the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict?*

- There is currently a vacuum of leadership in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. This office will need to play a significant role in driving the process forward.
- Despite improved coordination in the past several months between UN agencies, there is still significant confusion among agencies over who will have authority to implement the new mechanism on the ground. The field-level infrastructure still needs to be sorted out.
- Though NGOs were heavily involved in the process leading up to Resolution 1612, consultation with NGOs/civil society has diminished since the adoption of 1612. Key issues need to be addressed: What role will NGOs have in the system? How will grassroots organizations support the process? The flow of information must also be two-ways, rather than simply having NGOs send in reports from the field.
- Issues of risk and confidentiality for sources need to be addressed.
- Given the current lack of clarity, some organizations on the ground are reluctant to join up with this mechanism at this stage and would like to be involved in further consultations related to the development of the mechanism.
- There is a rush to achieve some form of reporting in five countries on Annex 1 in time for the July review mandated by resolution 1612. Given all of the challenging questions that still remain to be answered, one alternative proposal would be to attempt a more thorough and deliberate pilot project in one country that could result in a more substantial report and would identify the fundamental building blocks of a system that could later be adapted for other contexts.

*Input from meeting participants:*

The general discussion period was extremely engaging, given the tremendous interest in this topic. There were a range of questions and points raised by the participants in the meeting. These included:

- What is the best way to mitigate risk and ensure confidentiality? Are there proven strategies that should be more widely adopted?
  - The needs that need to be addressed will vary by context, and thoughtful assessments are needed for each country. Many organizations already have systems in place that should be supported and enhanced. The Watchlist has been working to identify lessons learned and feed them into the UN over the next several months.
- Does the current system allow for a country to be added to the Security Council's agenda because of child protection concerns?
  - This topic is politically sensitive. The idea of adding countries to the Security Council's agenda because of child protection concerns is considered a "back door" approach to the Security Council agenda – which is worrisome to many SC members. Attempting this approach at this time could put the children and armed conflict agenda in jeopardy.
- Many people in the field are not aware of this process.
  - Operational organizations should discuss this with their field staff and think about how they want to participate in the process.
- Beyond sending reports of violations to the Security Council and issuing sanctions, there is a need to measure and document the results on the ground to ensure the ultimate goals of the new mechanism are achieved.
- How will transnational issues and violations committed by non-state actors be addressed?
  - The mechanism is intended to address non-state actors, as well as governments that are violating children's rights. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and Geneva Call are working on a project to understand how to engage non-state actors and will hold a conference on this topic in June or July in Geneva.
- It is important to create a robust system that will result in tangible results on the ground for children. The challenge is creating a system that will not be overly cumbersome. Some of the key issues still to be worked out include how to protect the safety of children and communities that report violations, how to protect the staff that is collecting and compiling the information and how to safely handle and transmit the information from the field to various actors with obligations to respond, including the UN Security Council.
  - The new UN mechanism should complement existing efforts, rather than replace it.

## **Resources and Program Sharing**

### *DCOF Study with Neil Boothby*

- The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund is supporting a three-year study on programming and policy issues regarding children in situations of armed conflict or natural disaster which is being carried out by Program on Forced Migration and Health Mailman School of Public Health. The study is seeking to identify the key unresolved practice issues as well as the areas where there is good consensus. The first stage of this study is a detailed literature review, covering both published material and gray literature. All members of the WNCAC have received a message about the study and a request that they send relevant documents to Senait Assefa <[sna2003@columbia.edu](mailto:sna2003@columbia.edu)>.

### *Paper on Community-Led Prevention of Child Recruitment in West Africa*

- The paper, *Fighting Back: Child and Community-Led Strategies to Avoid Children's Recruitment into Armed Forces and Groups in West Africa* by Save the Children UK, can be accessed at [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk\\_cache/scuk/cache/cmsattach/3487\\_Fighting\\_Back.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk_cache/scuk/cache/cmsattach/3487_Fighting_Back.pdf).

### *Fact Sheet on Adolescent Girls Affected by Violent Conflict*

- This fact sheet highlights the unique needs and experiences of adolescent girls in situations of armed conflict and displacement. It urges policymakers to recognize the roles and capacities of adolescent girls and to give increased policy and program attention to adolescent girls as a distinctive group, including access to quality education. The fact sheet was produced by the *Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children*, and the *Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group* of the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee. It can be accessed at <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/AdolGirls.pdf>. Please contact [jennyp@womenscommission.org](mailto:jennyp@womenscommission.org) for further information or to request hard copies.

### *Report on Protecting Children Born of War*

- The report, *Protecting Children Born of Sexual Violence and Exploitation in Conflict Zones: Existing Practice and Knowledge Gaps*, was released by the Ford Institute of Human Security at the University of Pittsburgh. This report details the results of a series of focus groups with humanitarian stakeholders conducted between December 2004 and March 2005 and was funded by the National Science Foundation. It can be accessed at <http://www.pitt.edu/AFShome/c/h/charli/public/html/childrenbornofwar>.

### *Upcoming Paper on Child Protection in Eastern Chad*

- Christian Children's Fund recently conducted a child protection assessment in Eastern Chad. The study includes both qualitative and quantitative data and will be released shortly.

### *Upcoming Events*

- Save the Children UK and Radda Barnen (Save the Children, Sweden) are convening a conference in early February in Dakar to focus on what has been done and what has been learned in West Africa regarding the reintegration of child soldiers and other children separated by armed conflict. Please contact John Williamson at [j.williamson@mindspring.com](mailto:j.williamson@mindspring.com) for more information.

### *Information Request*

- Julie Guyot, MSW is researching children in leadership positions in camps in Africa. If you have information about children in leadership roles with decision-making responsibilities in these situations, please contact her at [julieguyot@hotmail.com](mailto:julieguyot@hotmail.com) or (202) 299-6276.