

WASHINGTON NETWORK ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

LAUNCH MEETING

THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2004, 10AM-12PM

MEETING NOTES

Search for Common Ground and the Displaced Children and Orphan's Fund convened the first meeting of the Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict in order to bring together the many diverse agencies and people who are working on this issue in the city. The first meeting aimed to identify

Introduction and Welcome to WNCAC

- Search for Common Ground - Michael Shipler
- Displaced Children and Orphans Fund - John Williamson

Participant Introductions

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| ➤ Abner, Carrie | ➤ Edouard-Binkley, Solène | ➤ Pagen, Christine |
| ➤ Allan, Ed | ➤ Grant, David | ➤ Parekh, Kimberly |
| ➤ Brothers-Jackson, Staci | ➤ Gulick, Robin | ➤ Payt, Sharon |
| ➤ Carneal, Chris | ➤ Kelsey, Joanne | ➤ Richmond, Glenda |
| ➤ Conradt, Kate | ➤ Levine, Carlisle | ➤ Serota, Art |
| ➤ Cosmas, Lam Oryem | ➤ MacLeod, Heather | ➤ Sherman, Gmakahn |
| ➤ Cronin, Meg | ➤ Morrell, Suzanne | ➤ Shipler, Michael |
| ➤ Dharmapuri, Sahana | ➤ Mugisha, Vincent | ➤ Sinnamon, Hilary |
| | ➤ Noel, Kent | ➤ Warren, Sarah |
| | ➤ Pack, Mary | ➤ Wessells, Mike |
| | | ➤ Williamson, John |

Meeting Activities and General Conclusions

The facilitators described WNCAC as an open, diverse, and inclusive group that seeks to foster communication and coordination between those working in issues related to children and conflict.

The participants engaged in several activities designed to gather input regarding how to shape WNCAC to best meet the needs of its members, and how its members can most effectively contribute back to WNCAC to the benefit of all. Information regarding thematic interests and operational preferences were also collected.

Expectations and Hopes for WNCAC

Participants considered that WNCAC is best positioned to be an information and resource network, enabling learning, partnerships, and dialogue. One participant described WNCAC as a

“community of practice” that will capitalize on opportunities by collaborating and sharing resources.

Generally, participants hoped to share practical lessons learned and good practices with regard to effective and efficient program design, implementation, and evaluation. WNCAC can also serve as a medium to link individuals considering approaches to current conflicts or issues, fostering open debate, brainstorming, and consolidation of efforts. This can reduce duplication and add value to work in regional conflict areas or topical themes such as trafficking, gender, and children with special needs.

Members can work together to raise awareness of issues relating to children and armed conflict. However, in order to maintain and encourage participation by representatives from government agencies and donor organizations, WNCAC would not itself engage in advocacy. Rather, it will serve as a forum in which members with similar interests can find each other and begin to work together outside of WNCAC towards their common goal.

Additionally, WNCAC will promote the education of its members by knowledge sharing and discussion. Meetings should include time to network and make announcements regarding the current work being done in the field. Suggestions included developing a CD of resources to be shared through out the network or to host a library of resources on a website.

Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for detailed suggestions offered by participants regarding operational issues.

Much information was collected regarding the thematic interests and issues that were of the most interest to the participants. Please refer to [Appendix 2](#) for this information. For participants, information is being collected regarding their specific interests in order to foster connections between those who attended the meeting.

Contributions of WNCAC Members

An important aspect of the meeting, and perhaps to the success and sustainability of WNCAC, was a discussion regarding what participants and their organizations could offer back to the greater group. Each participant gave thoughtful responses to their possible contributions. These included:

- Experience in fostering cross-sectoral efforts, including integrating protection and security
- Knowledge on coalition- or network-building
- Success encouraging youth participation, listening to youth, fostering youth talents
- Field and relief experience
- Ability to rally support within and provide the perspective of government and funding communities
- Advocacy through issue-based public awareness campaigns
- Knowledge and resources (thematic and geographical)
- Strategies for reaching the unreachable

- Energy
- Contacts on Capitol Hill, with funders or other networks
- Experience in policy change

Next Steps

- Define goals and responsibilities of group more clearly. This may take the form of a concept paper or a charter to be drafted and edited by WNCAC members.
- Design and distribute a member questionnaire.
 - Contact information (name, email, mail address, telephone, organizational affiliation(s))
 - Suggestions for developing funding for WNCAC
 - Logistical questions for next meeting to be held in September
 - Programmatic and thematic interests
 - Geographical interests and expertise

APPENDIX I: OPERATIONAL SUGGESTIONS

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT:

Many participants expressed that they would like to be able to easily contact other network members. The following ideas were suggested to facilitate access and communication.

- Create a searchable database of members that is hosted on a website.
 - Includes contact information (name, organization, email address, mail address, telephone number), geographical specializations, programmatic foci, and broader theme interests.
- Enable querying of the database (e.g., in order to distribute information to field offices, a member can pull a list of what organizations are working in the relevant geographical areas.)
- Distribute a contact sheet of all participants

Electronic communication should be encouraged and used to disseminate information, announcements, and resources.

- Host a listserv (INEE was suggested as an example) to share resources and announcements
- Message board or weblog where members can post new resources, make announcements, and share drafts of papers
- Hire a focal point to receive and disseminate information and to be in charge of knowledge management
- Vote on issues via email or website

MEETINGS:

The meeting format will meet the most success if it remains flexible, responsive, and owned by the Network members. The following ideas were suggested to facilitate these goals.

- Hold bimonthly meetings planned by a rotating committee and focused by theme or issue, depending on the interest of the committee.
- Elect working group or hire focal point to manage process for the rotating committee.
- Focal point or facilitators can foster subgroups by using the database to identify and introduce members with similar topics of interest.
- Subgroups can also be self-selected to discuss specific issues.
- Subgroups can take the initiative to coordinate events or workshops on alternate months or as needed. These may be purely educational or they may lead to advocacy efforts. Bi-monthly meetings need not be the only activity of WNCAC.
- Focal point should facilitate dialogue between subgroups.
- The structure of the Basic Education Coalition (structured yet flexible) could be a useful model.
- It is important to note that dividing into subgroups could possibly defeat the goal of information sharing. Subgroups, if they are formed, should incorporate education of

WNCAC as a key objective of their projects so that others can have an opportunity to learn.

Meeting frequency will be pre-determined to assist in scheduling, although supplemental events and workshops can be held as appropriate.

- Participants indicated a range of preferences. The majority seemed to prefer bi-monthly meetings, with other suggestions being quarterly and monthly.
- Meeting length also fell in a range from “not longer than 2 hours” to the hosting of daylong workshops.
- Because WNCAC strives to be flexible and responsive, a questionnaire will be distributed to gather information regarding these issues, but it is likely that the frequency and duration of meetings will vary.

The structure of meetings should be varied and creative. The following suggestions for meeting activities were offered.

- All or half of each meeting should be dedicated to discussion on a specific theme or issue.
- Topics should be identified in advance.
- Organizing committee and participants should send out invitations thoughtfully and dependant on meeting theme.
- Subgroups with similar interests can develop good practice exemplars, white papers, and other tools to share with and educate the Network.
- Subgroups can develop 5-minute skits to present that will inform small group discussions.
- Speakers can be invited from outside the Network, or members can present on their own specializations.
- Network should be a forum for discussion, idea sharing, and joint strategizing. Since members will contribute their own wealth of information, outside speakers are unnecessary.
- Meetings should include time for networking. At the beginning of each meeting, 10 minutes might be set aside during which participants must pair up with each other and share about their work and their organization, challenges they are facing, etc.
- Meeting location should be rotated between organizations.
- Creativity in presentations offer unique training opportunities, especially with regard to working with children. (Ex. Demonstrate activities that have been successful with youth in conflict)
- Sponsor a relevant movie (at “Visions” for example) and have an information discussion at a restaurant/café.

APPENDIX 2: THEMATIC INTERESTS AND ISSUES

EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Education in emergencies (including conflict, post-conflict, reconstruction) ➤ School and classroom capacity building: teacher training, educational administration, planning ➤ Access ➤ Role of basic education ➤ Life skills ➤ Learning Plus – what needs can be addressed for learning to occur? How? ➤ Professional support needs (e.g. teaching, counseling, nursing) in conflict areas ➤ Formalization/accreditation of non-formal/basic education programs ➤ What peacebuilding interventions done with children in schools are most effective? ➤ Non-formal education ➤ Alternative v. traditional classroom education (benefits) ➤ Community awareness of the benefits of educating CAAC
ADVOCACY FOR FUNDING AND POLICY CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Advocacy strategies for raising awareness and interest among policymakers and funding organizations ➤ How to have effective policy dialogue with people who don't want to listen ➤ Advocacy to public and to Capitol Hill ➤ The issue of WAR – Our network should oppose funding and supporting all wars in all forms
CHILD PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensuring issues of children and conflict are integrated into broader healing and development of communities ➤ Ensure holistic needs of children and families are addressed ➤ Continuously check ourselves to make sure we are promoting inclusion of children from all ethnic and religious backgrounds, children with disabilities, boys and girls, etc. ➤ Child participation ➤ Examine role that children and youth play in conflict and resolution – capacities in response
GOOD PRACTICES IN PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are good practices in linking psychosocial support, integrated humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding? ➤ Good practices in programs ➤ Reducing risk to children in design/implementation of humanitarian assistance ➤ Advocacy around child protection and integration ACROSS sectors

CAPACITY BUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lessons learned-best practices in community-focused reintegration planning ➤ Traditional and indigenous peacebuilding – grassroots level ➤ Multiplier effect – reach as many people as possible ➤ Capacity building ➤ How to integrate traditional means of reconciliation with international standards of justice, e.g., amnesty v. impunity ➤ Role of traditional healing and cleansing in recovery and reintegration ➤ Strengthen local institutional capacity to respond to issues of CAAC ➤ Service program development based on community input
CHILD SOLDIERS AND NONCOMBATANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CAAC who are not associated with fighting forces ➤ Beneficiaries: child soldiers and CAAC ➤ Repatriation into society ➤ Health issues of child soldiers (spread of disease, medical care, chronic maladies, inadequate socialization) ➤ What is being done re demobilization, reintegration, and where ➤ How do we ensure needs of female child soldiers are addressed in projects ➤ Holistic needs of former child soldiers and CAAC, prioritizing capacity-building needs of grassroots organization working with these populations ➤ Child exploitation as it relates to child soldiering (rape, use of drugs, physical abuse, neglect (food, basic needs) ➤ Job/skills/vocational training for former child soldiers/OVCs
IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ M&E – how to measure effectiveness ➤ Impact assessment ➤ Impact analysis (where has it been done, what were key findings, how do we do more of it) ➤ Evaluation of programs to demonstrate effectiveness ➤ Tools for effective M&E of CAAC programs ➤ What is really innovative and effective
COALITION BUILDING AND NETWORKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National/International coalition building – NY/Brussels ➤ Sharing contacts on Hill who can champion CAAC ➤ NGO – Government links
CURRENT CONFLICTS AND GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Coordination within particular geographic areas ➤ N. Uganda + S. Sudan ➤ Darfur, Sudan ➤ Specific conflicts with high numbers of child combatants – Sri Lanka, Uganda-Sudan, Middle East
SECURITY ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The place and usefulness of unarmed protective accompaniment ➤ Role of security of field staff
OTHER ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Role of UN? ➤ Learn gaps in funding ➤ Foster transition from relief to sustainability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Vote on who has made connections at beginning of each meeting➤ Conflict resolution/peace – healing/psychosocial➤ Parallel – domestic international programs
--	---