

THE WASHINGTON NETWORK ON
 WNCAC
CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Updating the Cape Town Principles of 1997
Meeting Notes, October 19th, 2005

The October meeting of the Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict focused on efforts that are currently underway to revise and update the Cape Town Principles. The principles were the first significant set of child protection standards focusing on children associated with fighting forces and have served as guidelines to agencies working in war zones. UNICEF is leading a revision process to update the principles to reflect current legal standards, increase their reach beyond Africa, and to engage a range of institutions and governments.

The conversation was framed by *Rebecca Symington* of UNICEF's Children in Armed Conflict Program Division. Questions included: What are the goals of the process? Which issues and lessons learned should be reflected in the update? How can WNCAC members contribute to the process?

Discussion Points:

What are the Cape Town Principles?

- The Cape Town Principles and Best Practices were developed in 1997 by child protection agencies based on their experiences in Africa.
- The Principles have no binding legal aspects. This can pose problems, but it also allows the standards to be quite high. The challenge in the current process will be maintaining the high standards while achieving broader political buy-in.

Why are they being updated?

- Advances in legal standards
- Incorporate some lessons learned
 - Realization that DDR must not take place exclusively after a peace process. It must take place during conflict to prevent re-recruitment.
 - Debate over transit care. Should it exist? How long should children stay in transit centers?
 - How can we expand community-based support?
 - Better inclusion of girls and addressing gender-based violence
 - Need to consider issues of juvenile justice and responsibility
 - Relationship of the funding for the disarmament and demobilization phases to the longer-term reintegration phases
- Obtain broader endorsement, both politically and geographically

How is the update process going to work?

- UNICEF is recruiting consultants to conduct seven regional analyses with interagency review with the involvement of organizations with expertise;
- Panel will review analyses and produce a draft of recommended revisions;
- This will lead to a global consultation in 2006

Input from meeting participants:

There were a range of points raised by the participants in the meeting on the process and the substance of the review. These included:

- There is a need to address the psychosocial issues facing children who have been involved with fighting forces
- Community involvement
- Integration of programmes targeting different vulnerable populations
- Need to work with all vulnerable children, not just former child soldiers

Ways for the Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict to feed the process:

Although there were no commitments made, the WNCAC could provide some support for the process by circulating drafts and questionnaires and possibly hosting a consultation in DC.

Resources and Program Sharing

Capstone Project

- Amanda Cox and Tomoko Horii are part of a team of consultants seeking a client for the spring of 2006 as part of their Capstone project for MA students at the School for International Affairs at George Washington University. The team consists of four second-year MA students in the international development studies program at GWU's Elliott School of International Affairs. This team is specifically interested in working on a child-focused project in the area of psychosocial evaluation/assessment, refugee reintegration, children in conflict, or emergency education. Their prospectus, bios, and resumes are available electronically by request. Please contact Amanda Cox at 202-213-0006 or by email at acox@gwu.edu with any questions.

DCOF Study with Neil Boothby

- The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund is supporting Neil Boothby's three-year study on children and armed conflict. 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. Please see the attached note from John Williamson for details.

Paper on Community-Driven Development in Liberia

- The paper, *Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment* by Paul Richards, Steven Archibald, Beverlee Bruce, Watta Modad, Edward Mulbah, Tornorlah Varpilah and James Vincent, Social Development Papers, World Bank, January 2005, can be accessed at <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/liberia/mediacentre/press/doc/Liberia%20Rapid%20Social%20Assessment.pdf>.

Upcoming Events

- Save the Children UK is convening a conference in February to focus on reintegration issues. The conference will take place in West Africa.
- Romeo Dallaire will host a conference in Ottawa in March to focus on preventing the use of children as soldiers. Please contact John Williamson (j.williamson@mindspring.com) or Michael Shipler (mshipler@sfcg.org) for more information.

Networks

- The Children and Youth Economic Strengthening Network is helping households, communities, and children meet their economic needs. The network is mostly based in Washington, but its focus is global. For more information, contact Benedicte Moncenis at bmoncenis@afr-sd.org.
- The Better Care Network is focusing on promoting alternative forms of care for orphaned children. The purpose of the network is to support information exchange and collaboration among the growing number of organizations, religious groups, governments and individuals that are working on this issue. BCN will also advocate for technically sound policy and programmatic action on global, regional, and national levels. For more information, contact Aaron Greenberg at agreenberg@unicef.org.

Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest

The Fund for the Future of Our Children (FFC) is sponsoring an essay contest for 11th and 12th grade students in the DC area. The Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest poses a challenge and an opportunity for students to develop peacemaking skills while writing on the topic of peace between the three faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This contest is being held in collaboration with Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and the Office of Campus Ministry. All participants will be honored with a certificate of accomplishment and by having their essays listed or published in a beautifully designed online anthology. There are first, second and third place cash prizes (\$2,500, \$1,500, and \$1,000 respectively), as well as cash prizes for runners-up (three \$500 and three \$250 prizes). For more information, please visit www.futureofchildren.net/essaycontest. The deadline for online registration is November 7, 2005.