

U.N. Efforts to Promote Child-Conscious Peacemaking and Peacekeeping: A Step Towards Improving the Lives of War-Affected Children

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I. INTRODUCTION

Children suffer disproportionately in war and benefit disproportionately less in peace.¹ In the years since the adoption of the first Security Council resolution on children and armed conflict in 1999, the United Nations (U.N.) system and the international community have repeatedly called upon peacemakers and parties-to-conflict to address children's issues during peacemaking processes, in peace agreements, and in the mandates and staffing of peacekeeping operations, lest they be overlooked and underfunded in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction budgets and plans.² In 2003, the Security Council called again upon "all concerned parties to ensure that the protection, rights, and well-being of children are integrated into the peace processes, peace agreements, and the post-conflict recovery and reconstruction phases."³ Whereas the peace processes in El Salvador (1991), Guatemala (1996), and Liberia (1997) failed to take children's concerns explicitly into account, peace agreements in Sierra Leone (1999), Burundi

* The views expressed in this article are entirely the views of the author in her personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

¹ In 1999, I observed that, despite increased international attention to children's rights, children are largely overlooked in peacemaking processes. *See generally* Ilene Cohn, *The Protection of Children in Peacemaking and Peacekeeping Processes*, 12 HARV. HUM. RTS. J. 129, 129 (1999) (providing an overview of war's impact on children, a discussion of why peacemakers have tended to overlook children's concerns, and an assessment of the unique opportunities afforded by peace processes to improve children protection).

² U.N. SCOR, 54th Sess., 4037th mtg., para. 12, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1261 (1999); *see also* U.N. SCOR, 55th Sess., 4185th mtg. para. 11, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1314 (2000) (recalling U.N. Doc. S/RES/1261); U.N. SCOR, 56th Sess., 4423d mtg. para. 8(e), U.N. Doc. S/RES/1379 (2001) (recalling U.N. Doc. S/RES/1314 and further recalling U.N. Doc. S/RES/1261).

³ U.N. SCOR, 58th Sess., 4695th mtg. para. 12, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1460 (2003).

(2000), and Liberia (2003) have included explicit child rights provisions.⁴ This trend is attributable to the steadily increasing international attention paid to war's impact on children and the practical realization among warring parties and mediators that addressing issues relevant to children can build confidence among parties and foster further dialogue while ideally also bringing immediate and long-term benefits to children.

Peacekeeping operations afford opportunities to monitor and report on the conduct of parties to conflict and induce compliance with legal obligations and political commitments. As early as 1999, the U.N. Secretary-General proposed to include child protection in peacekeeping mandates and to deploy child protection advisers (CPAs) with peacekeeping operations. The practice has been accepted and encouraged by the Security Council. It is now routine to consider deploying CPAs from the inception of mission planning.⁵ The Security Council has requested the Secretary-General to

⁴ Peace Agreement Between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, July 7, 1999, at preamble, art. XXX, available at <http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html> (last visited Sept. 21, 2004) [hereinafter Lome Agreement]; Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, Aug. 28, 2000, at Protocol I, ch. II, art. 7, ¶¶ 14, 26, available at http://www.usip.org/library/pa/burundi/pa_burundi_08282000_toc.html (last visited Sept. 21, 2004); see *id.* at Protocol II, ch. I, art. 3, ¶ 27; *id.* at Protocol III, ch. III, art. 25, ¶ 1; *id.* at Protocol IV, ch. I, art. 10; *id.* at Protocol IV, ch. III, art. 16, ¶ (i); Comprehensive Peace Agreement Between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy (MODEL) and Political Parties, Aug. 18, 2003, at art. XXXI, available at http://www.usip.org/library/pa/liberia/liberia_08182003_cpa.html (last visited Sept. 21, 2004) [hereinafter Accra Agreement].

⁵ The first CPA was deployed to Sierra Leone in 1999 pursuant to the Secretary-General's proposal. *Seventh Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone*, U.N. SCOR, 54th Sess., para. 51, U.N. Doc. S/1999/836 (1999). CPAs have since been deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Haiti, Burundi, and Sudan. See *Second Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Preliminary Deployment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, U.N. SCOR, 54th Sess., paras. 39–40, U.N. Doc. S/1999/1116 (1999); *Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on Angola*, U.N. SCOR, 57th Sess., para. 19, U.N. Doc. S/2002/834 (2002); *Report of the Secretary-General on Côte d'Ivoire*, 58th Sess., para. 80, U.N. Doc. S/2003/374 (2003). The Security Council resolutions incorporating child protection into peacekeeping mandates and approving, or urging the deployment of CPAs include the following: U.N. SCOR, 59th Sess., 4918th mtg. para. 6(e)–(f), U.N. Doc. S/RES/1528 (2004) (discussing the Ivory Coast); U.N. SCOR, 59th Sess., 4975th mtg. para. 16, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1545 (2004) (discussing Burundi); U.N. SCOR, 59th Sess., 4988th mtg., U.N. Doc.

continue to intensify monitoring and reporting activities by peacekeeping and peace-building support operations on the situation of children in armed conflict. The Council has also requested that the Secretary-General ensure that all peacekeeping personnel receive and follow appropriate guidance and training in international human rights and humanitarian and refugee law relevant to children. Furthermore, the Security Council has called upon the Secretary-General to ensure that in all his reports to the Council on country-specific situations, the protection of children in armed conflict is included as a specific aspect of the report.

As a matter of U.N. policy, children must be an explicit priority in all relevant peace-building plans and budgets.⁶ Among the issues that cannot be overstated are the importance of the re-establishment of basic social services and infrastructure, the reunification of separated children and the reintegration of child ex-combatants, the provision of basic education, special care and services for girls, consistent monitoring and reporting on child rights violations, strengthening of the rule of law, including juvenile justice, and addressing the impact of small arms, light weapons, landmines, and the illicit exploitation of natural resources on children. Children's rights must be a priority on the agenda of the government or the transitional authority and must be reflected in legislation, national and local government policies, and resource allocation. Local structures and networks that address the situation of children should be established, and children's views should be taken into account so that they participate actively in peace-building.

Advocates have successfully tapped into political processes and helped to strengthen legal frameworks in recent years, yet children's lives during and after armed conflict remain grim.⁷ Warring parties are not complying

S/RES/1547 (2004) (discussing Sudan); U.N. SCOR, 59th Sess., 4961st mtg. para. 9, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1542 (2004) (discussing Haiti).

⁶ Peace-building is defined as a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and resolution that includes a focus on immediate needs, root causes of conflict, and efforts to lay the foundation for durable peace through the (re-)establishment of an inclusive political, legal, social and economic order. *U.N. Plan of Action on Peace-building*, at ¶¶ 5–6 (adopted by ECPS/ECHA/UNDG on Oct. 31, 2001). Numerous Security Council resolutions call for the inclusion of child protection concerns in peace-building plans and budgets. *See, e.g.*, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1261, *supra* note 2, at para. 7; U.N. Doc. S/RES/1460, *supra* note 2, at para. 12.

⁷ *See We the Children: End-Decade Review of the Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children*, U.N. GAOR, 27th Sess., at para. 28, U.N. Doc. A/S-27/3 (2001). According to the Secretary-General, “[p]erhaps more children have suffered from armed conflicts and violence since the [1990 World] Summit [for Children] than at any comparable period in history.” *Id.*

with their obligations and commitments. In its 2004 resolution on children and armed conflict, the Security Council refrains yet again from asserting the importance of peacemaking processes and focuses instead on efforts to obtain compliance by parties-to-conflict with their various legal and political obligations to children.⁸ Child rights advocates and programmers also have a lot to learn about how to move beyond agenda-setting and framework-building exercises to construct a solid set of guidelines or lessons learned concerning whether and how child protection programs or initiatives actually work to improve the lives of children during and after conflict.

In the remainder of my remarks, I will (1) outline the steps U.N. staff members are taking to ensure the incorporation of child protection into peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace-building processes, (2) consider the extent to which progress in this endeavor is already being made, and (3) elaborate on the challenges posed by the warring parties' lack of compliance with child rights obligations and commitments, and the dearth of information available to child rights advocates, programmers, and donors regarding the impact of interventions intended to improve the lives of war-affected children.

II. GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRATING CHILD PROTECTION INTO PEACEMAKING PROCESSES

In early 2001, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations proposed the formation of an inter-agency working group to prepare guidelines that would assist U.N. mediators, negotiators, and heads of missions in the field to incorporate child protection concerns at the peacemaking stage, which would greatly facilitate subsequent efforts to foster child-conscious peacekeeping operations.

The inter-agency working group produced a set of (draft) U.N. guidelines on child protection in peace processes,⁹ which should help to ensure that the U.N. system executes its mandate to protect children at all stages of a peace process, from the moment U.N. mediators, negotiators, and

⁸ U.N. SCOR, 4948th mtg., U.N. Doc. S/Res/1539 (2004).

⁹ In 2002, the Secretary-General reported that "an inter-agency working group... [had] prepared draft guidelines on the integration of child protection in peacemaking, peacekeeping[,] and peace-building," which would be "submitted for consideration of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security at the end of [that] year." *Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict*, U.N. SCOR, 57th Sess., ¶ 8, U.N. Doc. S/2002/1299 (2002). The guidelines were in draft at the time of this symposium.

the heads of missions are engaged in efforts to resolve conflicts to the formation and implementation of peacekeeping operations and throughout U.N. efforts to promote the consolidation of peace.

The draft *Guidelines for the Integration of Child Protection in U.N. Peacemaking Processes* call upon peacemakers to work with the parties to the conflict to: (1) urge respect for relevant legal obligations embodied in international humanitarian, refugee, and human rights law instruments; (2) urge an end to egregious abuses; (3) propose international verification and monitoring of compliance with child protection obligations and commitments from the earliest possible stage of the peace process; (4) establish and fund mine action programs to help reduce exposure of children to death or injury; and (5) support the development of local capacities for mine action. Peacemakers should try to ensure that the protection and rights of children are explicitly articulated within each component and phase of a peace process, such as pre-cessate-fire agreements, cessate-fire agreements, demobilization plans and programs, and agreements on the following: human rights, the refugee or displaced population, girls, minority or indigenous populations, institutional strengthening and rule of law, legal or institutional reform, restitution or reparations programs, and transitional justice mechanisms, including truth commissions or tribunals. Peacemakers must make it clear to the parties that the U.N. cannot condone amnesties regarding war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, or other serious violations of the laws of war.

U.N. peacemakers are asked to encourage the various relevant U.N. system partners to pursue child protection programming, reporting, and advocacy initiatives that support the peace process. Peacemakers are urged to work with local authorities and organizations to obtain a clear sense of the local perspective on child protection issues and to encourage civil society involvement in the peace process by, for example, pressuring the negotiating parties to address child protection issues at the negotiating table and encouraging the parties to seek input on child protection concerns from local civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Peacemakers are also advised to form partnerships with member states, international financial institutions, and other donors to encourage them to use their influence with particular warring parties in support of compliance with child protection commitments, and to provide the technical assistance and financial cooperation necessary for the short and long-term implementation of the child protection components of the peace plan.

III. PROGRESS TOWARDS CHILD-CONSCIOUS PEACEMAKING

Parties to conflict have heeded the call to include child rights concerns in peace negotiations and agreements. Governments and insurgent groups in Burundi, Colombia, Sierra Leone, and the Sudan have made commitments to the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to include children's concerns on the agendas of on-going peace processes in those countries.¹⁰ The Lome Agreement that ended the conflict in Sierra Leone (July 1999) explicitly stated that children were to be granted special attention throughout the peace process and that child soldiers would receive special attention within the demobilization and reintegration programs.¹¹ The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, signed by most parties to the conflict on August 28, 2000, contained provisions relating directly to children affected by armed conflict, including references to the rights to education, health, protection in wartime, immediate cessation of child recruitment, and the provision of assistance to vulnerable groups, namely child heads of families, orphans, street children, unaccompanied minors, traumatized children, widows, women heads of families, juvenile delinquents, and the physically and mentally disabled.¹² The recent Accra Agreement for Liberia (2003) also explicitly provides protection for former child soldiers.¹³ Though peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC have not progressed, U.N. actors take every opportunity to encourage the FARC to refrain from recruiting and using children, and to work with the U.N. to demobilize children currently in their ranks.

It is too soon to say whether the explicit references to children (particularly child soldiers) in Sierra Leone and Liberia, have meant adequate and sustained attention and resources for appropriate programs. Child soldiers are specifically targeted in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) exercises in those two countries, though the best way of achieving former child soldier rehabilitation is not entirely clear. In

¹⁰ *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, U.N. SCOR, 55th Sess., para. 49, U.N. Doc. S/2000/712 (2000).

¹¹ Lome Agreement, *supra* note 4, at art. XXX.

¹² Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, *supra* note 4, at Protocol I, ch. II, art. 7, ¶¶ 14, 26; *see id.* at Protocol II, ch. I, art. 3, ¶ 27; *id.* at Protocol III, ch. III, art. 25, ¶ 1; *id.* at Protocol IV, ch. I, art. 10; *id.* at Protocol IV, ch. III, art. 16, ¶ (i).

¹³ Accra Agreement, *supra* note 4, at art. XXXI.

both countries, the U.N. Country Team, principally UNICEF and the peacekeeping operation—UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone and UNMIL in Liberia—are undertaking important child protection initiatives.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CHILD PROTECTION IN U.N. PEACE OPERATIONS

It is U.N. policy to ensure that relevant child rights and protection concerns are systematically addressed from the early planning through the execution of a U.N. peace operation. The draft *Guidelines for the Integration of Child Protection in U.N. Peacemaking Processes* target both the U.N. headquarters (HQ) staff responsible for mission planning and support and the Secretary-General's representative in the field.

The guidelines ask HQ staff to ensure the inclusion of child protection in mandates of peace operations and mission planning as soon as the Security Council becomes seized of a conflict situation. This is done by including observations and recommendations concerning the protection of children in the Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council. During mission planning or mandate review, reports are prepared for the Security Council's approval, and occasionally Council members will even travel to the field to observe a situation prior to resolving a mission mandate. HQ staff not only can incorporate relevant child protection issues into planning documents, but also can explicitly include them in the terms of reference for Security Council visits and assessment missions.¹⁴

The guidelines will encourage HQ staff to ensure that a proposed mission mandate provides for monitoring, verification, and follow-up to the child protection matters addressed in the peace process or in peace agreements, encourage adequate and sustained international technical assistance and financial support for U.N. and other child protection programs, and encourage international financial institutions to take the needs of children into account in their program planning and budgeting. Staff are also asked to help ensure that peacekeeping personnel being contributed by

¹⁴ Relevant issues include: institution-building or strengthening initiatives that address child rights concerns (juvenile justice administration, legislative reform, training for local police, penitentiary and justice administration officials, strengthening local child rights NGO capacity); child-conscious DDR; and child-conscious landmine clearance and awareness programs. These issues might be addressed in part by the deployment of child protection advisers, and human rights and rule of law experts with child rights expertise and in close collaboration with the U.N. Country Team.

member states receive training in child rights and protection issues prior to their deployment.

Peacekeeping operations are increasingly multi-dimensional, including units or specialized staff devoted to everything from security sector reform to rule of law, transitional justice, human rights, law reform, and political, economic, and military affairs. When CPAs form part of the mission staff, they play a prominent role in integrating child protection concerns throughout the work of the peace operation. Of course, CPAs and other mission personnel work closely with members of the U.N. Country Team, including UNICEF, OHCHR, and UNHCR, which is often on the ground prior to the outbreak of hostilities and the arrival of a peacekeeping operation, and long after peacekeeping mandates are terminated.

Child protection concerns must be mainstreamed throughout a mission's policies, programs, projects, monitoring, and data collection. In accordance with the draft guidelines, the head of the mission or the representative of the Secretary-General should develop a mission-wide approach of implementing the child protection aspects of the mission's mandate and establish a coordination mechanism for all actors mandated to address child protection issues. All monitoring and reporting activities should include the verification of child rights and protection, particularly when the parties have made specific commitments in this regard in a peace agreement. Occasionally, warring parties will adopt provisions in a peace agreement that raise the standard of behavior above that to which they are legally bound. This is one of the unique opportunities to advance child protection afforded by peace processes, and a peacekeeping operation's monitoring and reporting initiatives should be engaged to encourage compliance. The head of mission should also encourage donor support for child protection aspects of the mandate, compile and share the lessons learned and best practices in child protection across on-going peace operations, and ensure that the Security Council is apprised, through reports and briefings, by the Secretary-General or other U.N. actors, of the child-relevant aspects of the peace process.

The Security Council has requested the Secretary-General to ensure that all peacekeeping personnel receive guidance and training in international human rights and humanitarian and refugee law relevant to children, as well as appropriate guidance on HIV/AIDS.¹⁵ Training should seek to maximize the positive potential of peacekeeping personnel to improve child protection while ensuring adherence to the relevant codes of conduct. The guidelines ask the CPAs or the mission training staff to ensure that such training and

¹⁵ U.N. Doc. S/Res/1379 (2001), *supra* note 2, at para. 106.

follow-up is provided and that the consequences of transgressions of U.N. standards of conduct are clearly conveyed.

The U.N. system as a whole has taken a number of proactive steps in recent years to ensure that its staff members are not agents of abuse, particularly in humanitarian emergencies where allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers occasionally arise. The guidelines require the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to use all appropriate mechanisms and resources to ensure that pertinent codes of conduct incorporate specific standards set out in the Secretary General's "Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse," and that appropriate disciplinary and accountability mechanisms are developed and established.¹⁶ A system must be put in place to ensure appropriate supervision of personnel, and in the event that misconduct involving a child is attributed to peace operation personnel, immediate and thorough child-sensitive investigations and follow-ups are required.¹⁷ Such investigations should be conducted by specialists in this area.

The guidelines further indicate that the Secretary-General's representative, supported by the public information component, should develop public information tools and programs to promote child protection issues, support advocacy and reconciliation, and publicize the mission's child protection activities to support or reinforce their positive impact.

V. HAVE PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN DURING AND AFTER CONFLICT?

The Secretary-General now regularly includes child protection requirements in his proposed peacekeeping mandates and country-specific reports to the Security Council, which have to-date approved the deployment of CPAs in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, the DRC, Angola, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Burundi, and Haiti.¹⁸ The U.N. mission in Liberia has an explicit mandate to ensure the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers.¹⁹

¹⁶ See *Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse: Secretary-General's Bulletin*, at §§ 3.1, 3.2(a)–(f), U.N. Doc. ST/SGB/2003/13 (2003).

¹⁷ *Id.* at §§ 4, 5.

¹⁸ See *supra* text accompanying note 5.

¹⁹ U.N. SCOR, 4830th mtg. at para. 3(f), U.N. Doc. S/RES/1509 (2003).

The U.N. increasingly undertakes and supports government and NGO initiatives to collect information and disaggregated data on the impact of the armed conflict on children, and should include such data in reports and briefings to the Security Council together with observations and recommendations. CPAs have brought a wide range of egregious child rights abuses and child protection concerns to the attention of the Security Council, including the mutilation and sexual exploitation of children in Sierra Leone,²⁰ the forced recruitment of children in the DRC,²¹ and the importance of addressing child protection in transitional justice mechanisms in the DRC.²² The U.N. mission in Sierra Leone contributed to the demobilization of child soldiers and monitored the involvement of children in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Codes of conduct precluding sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel are now the subject of training for all staff, and a disciplinary regime is being developed to ensure that allegations of abuse of children are reported, investigated, and redressed appropriately.

VI. GUIDELINES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CHILD PROTECTION IN PEACE-BUILDING PROCESSES

Peace-building is a concept so broad as to include many U.N. initiatives undertaken during a conflict and virtually all initiatives in a post-conflict scenario. The draft guidelines for the incorporation of child protection into peace-building processes are thus similarly broad. They enumerate the child protection issues that should be taken into account and advise representatives of both the Secretary-General and members of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) how to integrate child protection priorities into the work of the various U.N. actors and partners.

The Secretary-General's representative in any given conflict or post-conflict setting should identify and help to integrate the local child rights priorities into the overall peace-building strategy, the plans and budgets of U.N. programs, and local, national, or transitional authorities. Particular attention should be paid to the implementation of any child protection

²⁰ U.N. Doc. S/1999/836, *supra* note 5, at para. 51.

²¹ U.N. Doc. S/1999/1116, *supra* note 5, at para. 40.

²² *Second Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, U.N. SCOR, 58th Sess., at ¶ 62, U.N. Doc. S/2003/566 (2003).

provisions in the peace agreement. The U.N. should ensure that donor countries and international financial institutions provide funding for the implementation of child-specific provisions of the peace agreement and other priority issues relating to children. U.N. actors must help ensure the development of a coordinated strategy to address child protection concerns, bringing together national or local government and civil society to eliminate the typically-occurring gap in the planning and funding of emergency and development-oriented programs that promote peace-building for children.²³

The U.N. must monitor and draw attention to violations of children's rights, coordinate support and assistance to the parties-to-conflict in a way that compels them to fulfill their obligations and commitments concerning children, urge influential states or donors to address child rights violations with the parties, and take action to compel adherence to obligations relating to children.

In peace-building settings, the U.N. is often well-placed to promote civil society and child participation in peace-building initiatives, help develop networks to monitor, investigate, and respond to child rights violations, encourage ratification of international instruments that protect children, advise and assist governments on law reform concerning children, provide technical assistance for the improvement of birth registration, support the (re-)establishment of protection and justice systems for children in need of legal protection and in conflict with the law, and provide training for judges and lawyers, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and social workers on child protection legislation and juvenile justice administration. The guidelines remind U.N. leadership of the relevance of child rights concerns to activities typically within the mandates of U.N. peace-building operations or country teams, including: (1) security sector reform; (2) truth and justice-seeking mechanisms; (3) efforts to curb trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural resources; (4) mine clearance and the provision of mine risk education; (5) the reintegration of separated children and the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers; (6) the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence; and (7) the rebuilding of basic social services infrastructures.

²³ See Ilene Cohn, *Peace-building for Children in the Midst of War*, 43 DEVELOPMENT 46, 47-48 (2000).

VII. CHILD-CONSCIOUS PEACEMAKING AND PEACEKEEPING ARE ONLY PART OF THE SOLUTION

The inclusion of child rights concerns in peace agreements, peacekeeping mandates, and peace-building plans and budgets is, of course, only effective if the parties to the conflict adhere to their obligations and commitments and if technical know-how and financial resources are available to implement and support appropriate programs. Very often, the U.N. or NGOs will denounce child rights violations during and after conflict, but fail to undertake the conflict and actor-specific analysis necessary to formulate targeted recommendations to the wide range of actors that could use their influence to improve the situation. As violations persist, advocacy organizations tend to call for increased monitoring and reporting—avoiding the much harder task of identifying political, economic, or other initiatives that will reward compliance and make non-compliance by particular actors too costly.

Effective use and implementation of the guidelines will require the mediator, negotiator, or other U.N. representative to adapt the provisions to the particular context within which he or she is working and to determine the appropriate stage at which the initiatives suggested in the guidelines are best raised and pursued. On occasion, it will be important to tailor a package of financial, technical, or other support to a particular party to a conflict to encourage them to take steps that advance child protection.

When the U.N. is asked to advise governments, civil society organizations, or others on the implementation of the child-conscious policies or programs provided for in peace agreements, peacekeeping mandates, or development program plans, the lack of knowledge about how best to proceed often becomes glaringly apparent. For example, the international community has assisted in the demobilization of child soldiers since the late 1980s, and still we see a muddle of programs and approaches as new programs are developed—most recently in Liberia. Child rights organizations disagree, for example, over whether children ought to be immediately reunified with their families when this is possible, or housed for some period of time (the ideal length of stay is also debated) in interim care centers where a range of services and/or training opportunities might be provided. It is not clear how best to design a demobilization and reintegration process to attract and serve girls who have served in armed forces or groups as soldiers, camp followers, wives, sexual slaves of combatants, or are now the mothers of children of combatants. Successful reintegration is at least in part a function of skills training that enables a

former combatant to be self-sustaining upon return to his or her community. Yet training in irrelevant vocations—those for which no jobs will be found in the local economy—is still routinely provided to former child combatants.

The failure of child rights advocacy and program agencies, including the U.N., to assess the qualitative impact of our interventions on behalf of war-affected children over the medium and long-term hinders our ability to advocate for particular programs, guide the flow of donor contributions, and suggest “best practices” or “lessons learned” in programming for war-affected children. In the near future, this knowledge must be attained if the U.N. is to provide consistent and credible technical advice on, for example, child soldier rehabilitation programs, psychosocial healing programs, and the involvement of children as witnesses or defendants in transitional justice mechanisms.

