Save the Children

CHILDREN PEACE AND SECURITY

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
APSTA	African Peace Support Trainers Association
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Land
AU	African Union
SRSG-CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CAR	Central African Republic
CCRT	Climate Change Risk Index
CESA 16-25	Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (AU)
CEWS	Conflict, Early Warning Systems
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CGL	County Government of Lamu
CMW	Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
COMPASS	Creating Opportunities through Mentorship, Parental involvement and Safe Space
CNRA	National Agricultural Research Commission
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPA	Child Protection Advisor
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CSEP	Civilian Society Education Partnership
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DDR	Demilitarization, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRPSIAP	Regional Directorate of Planning, Statistics and IT
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community Southern African States
EDUCO	Cooperation and Education for Children
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWS-NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
GCPEA	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

HPSS	Humanitarian Peace Support School
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAC	International Armed Conflict
IAPTC	International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centre
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDC	Internally Displaced Children
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IP	Internet Protocol
IPSTC	International Peace Support Training Centre
KALRO	Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation
KES	Kenya Shillings
KICD	Kenya Institute Curriculum Development
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
LAWASCO	Lamu Water and Sewerage Company Limited
LRA	Lord Resistance Army
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MJTF	Multi-Agency Joint Task Force
MoE	Ministry of Education
MTM	Medina at Tawheen wau Mijahideen
NGN	Nigerian Naira
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIAC	Non-International Armed Conflict
NPS	National Police Service
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OTI	USAID's Transitional Initiative
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
PDEPPNF	Provisional Directorate for Non-Formal Education and Pre-School Education
PDSEC	Social, Economic and Cultural Development Plan
PKO	Peace Keeping Operation
PoC	Protection of Civilians
PSC	Peace and Security Council

PSO	Peace Support Operation
PSRD	Peace and Security Research Department
PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
RCPS	Reference center for Psychosocial Support
RDEPPNF	Regional Directorate for Non-Formal Education and Pre-School Education
REC	Regional Economic Community
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SALWs	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SCI	Save the Children International
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
SS	Safe Space
SSD	Safe Schools Declaration
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFSS	United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards
UNGP	United Nations Guiding Principle
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Commission
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNWGCAC	United Nations Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WACA	Plan International West and Central Africa
WGSS	Women and Girls Safe Space
WHO	World Health Organisation

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As evidenced in the quality of the final chapter contributions, a special thanks goes to all who took part in the Research Symposium both as participants and as presenters. The exchange of practical knowledge and ideas were key in strengthening the content in the book chapters. A word of appreciation goes to all authors of the chapters of this book. Your tireless efforts to conceptualize, research and package content worthy of the calibre of such a text is highly appreciated.

The valuable technical and intellectual support availed by the wider Peace and Security Research Department as well as the other platforms of IPSTC; Peace and Conflict Studies School, the Humanitarian Peace Support School and the Postgraduate School cannot be overlooked. This was key in the planning and execution of the Research Symposium that gave rise to this book project.

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This book publication being an inaugural for Save the Children and IPSTC partnership, realization of future undertakings of a similar nature are only bound to get better with the lessons learnt as well as the opportunities for improvement and support of all acknowledged above. It is hoped that the text offers much-needed impetus towards supporting the main beneficiaries who are the children in armed conflict.

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FOREWORD

The International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) is a Centre of Excellence in research and capacity building of the Military, Police, and Civilians working within the theatre of Peace Support Operations (PSO) responding to armed conflict and other complex emergencies. The Centre has a robust Child Protection Programme that is Accredited by the United Nations.

This book has been inspired by IPSTC in collaboration with Save the Children through a regional research conference held in April 2022 at the Centre's Operational and tactical training school known as Humanitarian Peace Support School (HPSS). The theme for the conference was *"Children, Peace and Security"* and the target audience included subject matter experts who comprised the military, police and civilian personnel working within the child protection domain. Experts drawn mainly from the academic fraternity are the contributing authors of the book chapters herein.

The perspectives and depth of knowledge as well as expertise that these contributors bring to the book are immense and well-rounded. The sub-thematic areas are covered to outline the need to delve deeper into child protection within the different contexts and geographical spaces and dynamics that cause suffering to children in armed conflict theatres. These include dynamics and context that characterize intra-state conflicts, disasters, climate change, violent extremism, and political instability.

This book will seek to enhance knowledge sharing and contribution on various issues towards building capacity on issues directly related to child protection within peace support operations, intra-state conflicts, and complex emergencies.

These efforts are situated within the mandate of the Africa Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) that encourages African Solutions for African problems through regional mechanisms in collaboration with various stakeholders relevant to child protection hinged towards sustainable peace and stability within states. This is because children are affected by armed conflict through the six grave violations that include killing, maiming, involvement with armed groups and armies, and abduction, just to name a few.

The Centre wholesomely appreciates all stakeholders, actors and other partners including the institutions and organizations represented by the contributors towards making the book a reality. IPSTC also appreciates the continued partnership and collaboration the Centre has cordially had with Save the Children, especially in this worthy venture.

This book will seek to enhance knowledge sharing and contribution on various issues towards building capacity on issues directly related to child protection within the peace support operations, intra-state conflicts, and complex emergencies

As we look forward to the impact this book will bring as a result of the insights shared, we can only hope that the recommendations herein will be used to enhance the delivery of better protection standards for children in armed conflict in Africa and beyond.

Thank you!

J C Sitienei
Brigadier
Director, IPSTC

Africa is home to 1 billion people, half of whom will be under 25 years old by 2050. The region is experiencing overlapping and complex crises, leading to rising humanitarian assistance and protection needs. To adequately situate the importance of this book with the global trends, an estimated 420 million children -1 in 5- live in conflict zones. Hundreds of thousands of children die annually because of armed conflict's indirect effects, including malnutrition, disease, and the breakdown of healthcare, water, and sanitation services. There has been a 34% increase in the number of children living in conflict zones since 2010 and a 170% rise in incidents of grave violations against children, as verified by the United Nations. Of the ten worst conflict-affected countries with a high risk on a child, six are in Africa, demonstrating an urgent need for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict across the continent. The evolution of conflict dynamics over the years and violations committed against children pose the greatest threats to child protection in conflict situations.

Protecting children in conflict is one of the defining challenges of the 21st Century. Despite the advancement of international and regional legal and policy frameworks, children's plight in armed conflict situations is of concern as their rights are violated with impunity.

Contemporary conflicts present more challenges for children, especially given the increasing number of violations committed against children, the growing number of actors in any given conflict, and the complexity of drivers of conflict that have had the consequence of delaying and complicating resolution processes and the protracted nature of the conflict itself. The diversity of conflict in Africa precludes the possibility of presenting a universal picture thereof and children's experiences from a Pan-African perspective. Some African countries have experienced prolonged and protracted conflicts that have almost wholly undermined governance and led to the partial or total collapse of child protection systems. Of the 21 country, situations outlined in the 2021 annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, 19 (90 per cent) have continued to be highlighted in the annual report for the last eight years. As the conflicts become more protracted, families get forced to leave their homes and ecosystems of livelihoods resulting in increased susceptibility to violations, especially among children.

Save the Children, and the International Peace Support Training Centre are delighted to share this book with you; which is a labour of commitments to children by excellent scholars and practitioners of child protection from across Africa, the United States of America, and Europe to inform policy actors, practitioners and academia on the plight of children in armed conflict. Protecting children in conflict - and with it, the realization of the promises made in the declarations, conventions, and statutes of the 20th Century - is one of the defining challenges of the 21st Century. Despite the advancement of international and regional legal and policy frameworks, children's plight in armed conflict situations is of concern as their rights are violated with impunity. This justifies the existence of several actors and their initiatives informing conventions and declarations regarding children's well-being and safety on matters of peace and security. The emerging threat of climate change is also notable, whose effects are being felt across various sectors worldwide. Key issues that need attention to revolve around remodeling interventions in order for them to be responsive to the changing times. Further, as much as information on child protection exists, an update packaged in such a format couldn't be timelier.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank IPSTC for partnering with Save the Children in the production of this book.

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CHAPTER

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE:
THE UNSEEN AREA OF PEACE AND SECURITY

BY:
ANITA WANJIKU MUGO

ABSTRACT

Within sub-Saharan Africa, population movement continues to be an urgent contemporary dilemma in maintaining regional peace and security in various states. The paper places emphasis on the recurring migration of children propagated by armed conflict. It aims to provide an overview of the status of the state's fulfilment of its obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the African child migrant within the peace and security spectrum. It emphasizes the diverse context-driven push and pull factors that necessitate the children to flee from their countries. The study offers an outlook on the relevance of current regional protection systems particularly the *African Charter on The Rights and Welfare of the Child*. It gauges the legislative framework's efficiency in ensuring states address the protection needs of children on the move in Africa. Structured and detailed online research was carried out that consisted of online desktop research and a review of books, websites and academic journals that aided in the summaries of the paper. The analysis concluded an urgent need to address prevailing weaknesses in the implementation of regional child protection systems. Moreover, the need to incorporate context-specific child protection principles for further development of these systems by African states.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of children within peace and security has long been faced with a never-ending obstruction. The obstruction occurs when local and international policymakers in peace and security scarcely acknowledge children younger than 18 years as stakeholders. Instead, they are deprived of their rights as stakeholders within the framework of peace and security. Moreover, they are stripped of their agency and often lumped into the broad category of passive civilians ("women and children"), collateral victims or forcibly abducted children (Stoffel, 2020). Therefore, this presents an underlying dilemma because, without the involvement of children as stakeholders, policies formulated will only provide half a solution. This is because they will only prioritize their protection needs and leave out a crucial component of the various children's perspectives and agency. Undoubtedly, the inability to effectively cater for the specific needs of children alongside their agency will curtail the overall aim of preventing violence and maintaining sustainable peace.

DEFINITIONS

The term 'children on the move' is loosely used to describe children who have left their places of residence to other areas of accommodation within or outside their countries. The phrase has broadened and necessitated the need to accommodate a wider spectrum that covers children who are faced with different forms of migratory situations. In accordance with the objectives of the paper, Mike Dottridge has offered an adequate description of the terminology, whereby he describes them comprehensively as Those children who have left their place of habitual residence and are either on the way towards a new destination or have already reached such a destination. A child [on the move] can move across State borders, or within the country. S/he can be on the move alone, or in a group with family members, other adults and/or children, known or unknown previously to the child (Dottridge, 2013). The definition at first glimpse may offer a comprehensive summation, however, it fails to capture crucial aspects of child migration such as the diverse push and pull factors that may drive the children to migrate or the various contextual conditions and circumstances that said children face upon transit and arrival in their countries of transit and destination.

Hence, Bustamante (2009), a former UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants was able to offer an additional definition that was able to capture the diverse contextual circumstances and conditions that child migrants face within armed conflict. He defined children on the move as migrant children taking an active part in the migration process, particularly at the passage and arrival states in countries of transit and destination. They may be found, inter alia, migrating with their family members or independently, to seek opportunities at both the educational and employment levels. They may also be found entering host countries to rejoin migrant members of the family, being relocated or

sent by families to stay with relatives or friends in third countries or, as the Special Rapporteur has documented, sent by family members to find work abroad and send part of their earnings home. This effectively demonstrates the various contextual scenarios that child migrants face and goes a step further to display illustrations, mostly social-economic, factors that preempt the movement of children across or within state borders.

PERSPECTIVE OF CHILDREN MIGRANTS AS VICTIMS OR ACTORS IN ARMED CONFLICT

Children as Victims of Military Action

Children are more prevalent to be affected by situations occurring from armed conflicts due to the establishment of conditions that further worsen their vulnerability. More so, the children's young age inhibits them from fully comprehending armed conflict and the lack of a means of defending themselves from the danger that conflict brings. This further exacerbates the numerous diverse ways they are affected by protracted armed conflict. Whereby, children are left helpless and alone due to prevailing conditions that arise from conflict and insecurity i.e. internal displacement, refugee context, armed forces recruitment and even violent extremism. Moreover, they are faced with the high risk of being recruited as soldiers by armed groups, others are compelled to become trafficked as sex workers or even enslaved to become labourers in diamond or coltan mines. To worsen, in the chaos of war and flight, displaced children become separated from their families and unable to indicate where they come from, end up alone on the streets vulnerable to the worst forms of abuse or placed in orphanages that are barren of resources and often, it seems, hope (Mooney & Paul, 2010). This effectively demonstrates the urgent requirement for protection and assistance from national authorities as well as international actors in peace and security.

> Violence against children has been used systematically as a means to eradicate and annihilate particular ethnic, religious groups hence acting as a determinant for the group's survival status in future.

In addition, children are often on more occasions deliberately targeted by parties during an armed conflict in Africa. This pushes them further from the outdated perception of them merely feeling the aftermath of armed conflict as collateral damage but instead brings in a new perception of violence against children as a tactic and strategy of war. Whereby in some instances children have undergone torture to obtain intelligence and some have undergone further extremes to be used as human shields against opposing armed forces. Furthermore, violence against children has been used systematically as a means to eradicate and annihilate particular ethnic, and religious groups hence acting as a determinant for the group's survival status in future. For instance, during the Rwandan genocide, children were targeted and framed as a threat from the very beginning (Stoffel, 2020).

Admittedly, the aftermath of conflict inflicts a greater deal of suffering on children as they are considered the cardinal victims of protracted conflict. They are even further classified into seven diverse categories by which conflict further relegates them to the role of victim. First, as civilian victims, child soldiers, displaced children, orphans, wounded or handicapped children, imposed children and exploited children. Admittedly, each of these categories promptly displays the various contextual scenarios that children fleeing from conflict are either indirectly or directly compelled to undergo. For instance, as civilian victims, children become victims when schools and hospitals are often targeted during the armed conflict by armed forces. More so, they become victims of exploitation as most of the time, sexual violence increases considerably during times of conflict (Garreau, 2012). As they can either be exploited to accumulate personal or material gain and even become trafficked as sex workers.

Children as Actors in Armed Conflict

The involvement of children in armed conflict is not necessarily a new concept in history, as this has been a recurring phenomenon globally and more so within sub-Saharan Africa. For, according to the 2017 UN Secretary-General's report, Somalia, South Sudan, and Nigeria were some of the countries with the highest number of reported Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG)

that year (Regilme & Spoldi, 2021). Moreover, there exists a broad variation and means by which children are involved and actively partake and even shape conflicts within Africa. Whereby, their direct engagement as actors in a conflict occurs by being recruited by national government forces, armed rebel groups and even paramilitary groups. This arbitrarily has placed them in an optimal position to be utilized as agents of war by parties involved in a conflict.

Hence, the phenomenon of CAAFAG has been further propagated as the recruitment of children has become relatively easier. This is due to the wide availability of options that parties can resort to. Notably, aside from the long-standing traditional method of forced recruitment by abduction, children have also joined armed groups voluntarily out of mere desperation. In addition, with the staunch belief that the armed group acts as their sole option as a means to secure their survival in the face of a lack of a constant social support system provided by the family unit and curtailed access to necessities. Not to mention the feeling of empowerment that comes with playing an active role in conflict (Stoffel, 2020). This further solidifies the psychological long-term impact exposure to armed conflict has on children. Similarly, just as is displayed with adult fighters, children will indeed proceed with fighting as a means to preserve their lives and well-being if they perceive it to be placed under continuous threat.

Also, the continuous active engagement of children in conflict has steadily increased and has further been facilitated by the rapid evolution of the dynamics and characteristics of war. Notably, the technological development of small arms and light weapons has tremendously encouraged the active engagement of children on the front in armed conflict. More so, the manufacture of weapons has rapidly increased, making them relatively simpler to use, smaller and lighter to carry and even requiring less specific competencies to utilize during the conflict. As, there are numerous instances of children using SALW, such as the testimony of a 14-year-old boy from Sierra Leone boasting about his skilled use of his light weapon (Wessells 2006, p. 19). Undoubtedly, this fact has further expanded recruitment possibilities by transnational armed groups to entail cross-border recruitment of minors to take part in an armed conflict beyond their countries of origin.

Furthermore, indirect engagement of minors is not necessarily limited to traditional combat roles at the front lines. As they can simultaneously take up support roles that also heavily influence and impact the trajectory of protracted armed conflict in Africa while also encompassing heavy risk and extreme hardship on the part of the child. They can be used as spies, scouts and messengers for intelligence purposes. Alongside this, they can be used as cooks, porters and even sex slaves by armed groups as this is especially seen with girl recruits. Admittedly, this factor is further reinforced by the unique vulnerabilities attributed to their gender and position in society. As a result, they suffer specific consequences including, but not limited to, rape and sexual violence, pregnancy and pregnancy-related complications, stigma and rejection by families and communities (UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children, n.d.).

In addition, conflict translates to the killing and loss of human lives thus including the death of adults hence children are compelled to ascend to the traditional role of caregivers in their own families. As they are now required to care for their siblings and even find alternative sources of labour some hazardous to earn a living to sustain themselves. In summary, these harrowing experiences and extreme levels of hardships are bound to have a heavy impact on children. Hence, they play a significant role in maintaining community structures in conflict zones, and, ultimately become determinants of societal stability (Stoffel, 2020).

Conflict translates to the killing and loss of human lives thus including the death of adults hence hildren are compelled to ascend to the traditional role of care givers in their own families.

ROOT CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT THAT NECESSITATE CHILD MIGRATION

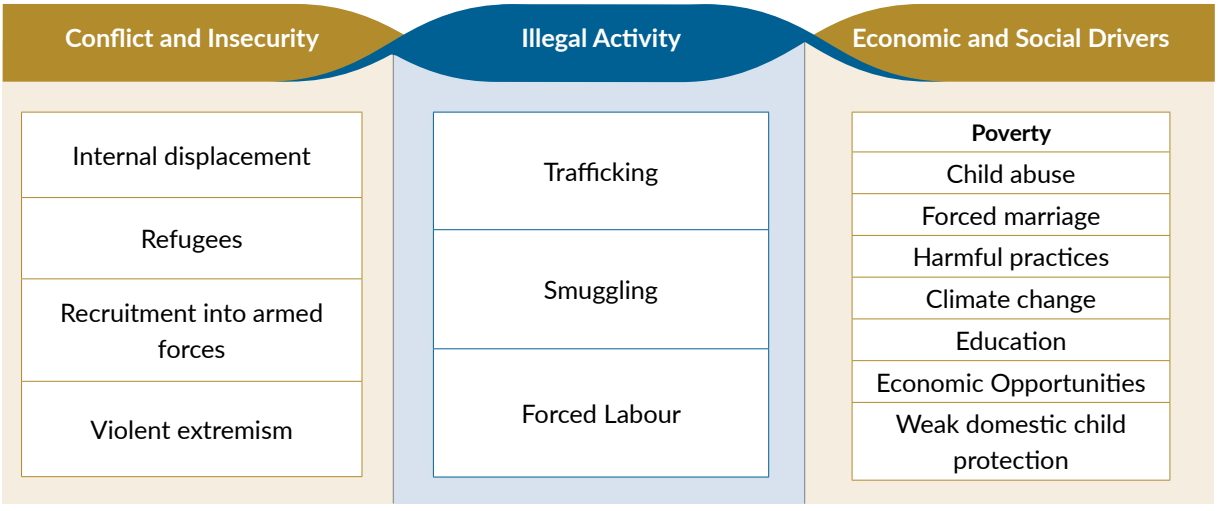
The steadily increased rate of child displacement has been observed within Africa ever since the mid- 2010s. This firmly demonstrated the medley of immediate and structural factors that occur simultaneously leading to the movement of different categories of children in Africa. Hence, for the purpose of the study, these multiple drivers have been classified into three categories as shown below and will be explored in depth.

UNRESOLVED CONFLICT AND INSECURITY

Protracted and drawn-out conflicts are amongst the cardinal underlying factors that cause massive movement and displacement of people including children within Africa. As the number of people forced to leave their homes from the start of the conflict in 2013 is over four million, including about 1.9 million people internally displaced, with around 85% estimated to be children and women (ACERWC, 2018.

i. Refugees and Internal Displacement

Firstly, forced displacement from 2005 was greatly attributed to long and drawn-out conflicts which have inherently produced devastating consequences on children within the sub-Saharan region. It is estimated that by 2016, Africa recorded 12.6 million internally displaced people which was equivalent to a third of internally displaced people globally. Not to mention, UNHCR estimates that of the 5.4 million refugees in Africa, 53% are children (ACERWC, 2018). Undoubtedly, ongoing conflicts within the Great Lakes, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan and the Lake Chad Basin regions have acted as a great continuous source of great risk to the welfare of children within the region. Notably, the highest number of child refugees originate from Somalia, followed by South Sudan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic (UNICEF, 2016, p. 56). In a similar fashion, South Sudan currently houses numerous displaced Congolese nationals while also hosting Sudanese refugees who have fled conflicts in the regions of the Blue Nile and South Kordofan. Meanwhile, South Sudanese have fled in all directions, including Sudan, Uganda, the DRC, and CAR (Williams 2019).



Visual 1: Classification of drivers of movement among children in Africa

ii. Recruitment into Armed Forces

Often, used as a tactic and strategy with the sole purpose of terrorizing and even intimidating civilians and children within a community. The recruitment of children is used for a string of multifaceted functions apart from direct engagement in hostilities. As they are used as fighters as well as for domestic purposes such as porters, messengers, cooks and spies while also being predisposed to sexual exploitation. Frequently, the children can either be abducted from their communities or compelled to join the ranks of armed groups by forced conscription.

Out of fear and in order to avoid the brutal tactics of these armed groups the children will opt to flee from their homes. Also, as a means of avoiding any form of suffering or taking part in physically, psychologically and socially derogatory behaviours they are often compelled to take part. As, they are often compelled to either take part in committing acts of immolation, beheadings, summary executions and being used as human shields and even becoming human shields during the conflict.

iii Violent Extremism

Violent extremism has developed into another root cause of massive child displacement, as it has been often targeted towards children themselves. The lethal risk posed by violent extremism to children arises through various means. Whereby, as a recent recurring occurrence that has acutely developed over the years, terrorist groups have specifically recruited children for varied reasons that work towards the group's advantage. For instance, to boost the group's visibility on an international scale. As, this has been used over time by Boko Haram in Nigeria, whereby they have exposed and used children to carry out acts of violence. Hence, this has acted as a means of startling the wider public audience while also demonstrating the group's prowess and brutality on an international scale.

In the same way, children will be hesitant and strive to avoid being recruited to carry out various malicious roles as dictated by the group. As these roles can assume diverse forms and often result in the subsequent exploitation of the child. For, they are often used to carry out front-line fighting. For instance, Boko Haram has been known to use children as suicide bombers, which has become a defining signature of the group's character. Notably, OHCHR received consistent reports that boys and girls were increasingly being used as human shields and to detonate bombs (UNODC 2017). Similarly, the group has been known to intimidate recruits to attack their family members as a means to pledge loyalty to Boko Haram. Also, during attacks, the abducted recruits have been used as a means to pick out those that were reluctant to become part of the group alongside identifying women and girls who were unmarried. Meanwhile, the abducted girls have been coerced to enter into marriage and provide domestic labour for the group such as cleaning, cooking, and carrying equipment and weapons. Admittedly, this has been used as a normalization strategy that acts as a means to increase the allure of the group to prospective recruits.

Hence, the combination of these factors contributes greatly to the overall adverse effects on children exposed to these protracted armed conflicts. Bearing in mind that over half of the world's refugees are comprised of children further pushes for the urgent need to effectively address the root cause of unresolved conflict and the need to stabilize security conditions within states. Not to mention, the need to adequately formulate effective responses towards curbing the overall detrimental impact that violent extremism has assumed especially when targeted towards children.

ILLEGAL ACTIVITY

Child Labour/ Movement in search of work

With the onset and progress of conflict and crisis in Africa, it is often accompanied by the subsequent augmentation of child labour within the region. As it is noted, there is a strong interconnection between child labour and armed conflict. While taking into account that the African region is amongst those most afflicted with conflicts hence the accompanying great risk of child labour. Alongside this, children's involvement in armed conflict and other illicit activities is also seen to escalate. Also, it has been observed that armed conflict has led to children being rapidly drawn into overwhelming conditions and forms of child labour. Through this, they are faced with grave and worrying circumstances of abuse, exploitation and violation of their rights.

Admittedly, displaced children and refugees are often seen to work in diverse sectors of labour. Mostly, child labour is often used as a cardinal form of the coping mechanism when children are faced with other underlying conditions. These conditions mainly consist of economic reasons such as poverty and social and cultural reasons which greatly encourage children's movement in search of work. According to UNCTAD, contemporary economic migration in the African continent mainly involves low-skilled migrants and is predominantly concentrated in sectors such as agriculture, informal trade and domestic service (UNCTAD 2018:84). For instance, it is noted that the most deplorable kinds of child labour are found within the agricultural sector. In addition, "such labour takes place mostly in rural areas and represents a cheap workforce for small-scale farming mostly non-mechanized labour-intensive methods of production involving high risks (Hassanien 2019). Due to the children's state of vulnerable conditions, they are easily subdued to take up labour both unpaid and paid.

Smuggling

Smuggling is a key instigator of the child's movement. For, children migrate to flee armed conflict as they pursue safe and secure living conditions. Frequently, most children who wish to migrate lack the required legal access to authorized avenues for migration. These opportunities can include family reunification, humanitarian visas, work and study visas as well as refugee settlement hubs which are inaccessible to the children. Despite these, barriers to accessing legal means of migration do not prevent the children from participating in the process. Whereby, whilst on the move when they encounter hurdles in accessing legal channels that are often practically missing, inefficient and exorbitant. They often have to solicit the illicit assistance of migrant smugglers regardless of the dangers they may encounter ahead in their journey. For, they perceive services offered by migrant smugglers to be their only feasible alternative. Admittedly, migrant smuggling proliferates with the implementation of restrictive migration policies and becomes increasingly lucrative as migration controls evolve (UNODC 2019).

Smuggling is a key instigator of child movement. For, children migrate in an effort to flee armed conflict as they pursue safe and secure living conditions.

As smuggling is inherently covert in nature, smugglers can easily vary from the individuals aiding children to move at a substantial fee to a well-organized formation of criminal networks that transport children into perilous and exploitative conditions. In addition, children are placed in unaccommodating and unpredictable circumstances, as the trade can easily become manipulative. Particularly, when children incur arrears to pay the smuggler's fee. This results in smugglers capitalizing on the situation and the children can either be enslaved, ransomed or forced to endure gender-based violence and debt bondage.

Trafficking

Similar to its counterpart, child trafficking has also become highly extensive and a great instigator of the child movement in Africa. Similarly, there is no accurate depiction of the true scale by which child trafficking is carried out within the continent. However, the quota of children who have fallen victim to trafficking has become considerably large. In addition, reported figures varied between regions. For, it is more rampant in certain regions within Africa as compared to other regions. For, most occurrences have been witnessed in Libya, Sudan and many other western and northern African states. This indicates it occurs mostly in western, eastern and northern Africa than in southern Africa. Nonetheless, children on the move are considered at risk of being faced with optimal conditions of trafficking. More so, children who normally travel unaccompanied without supervision and the company of family or legal guardians are more susceptible to being victims of trafficking.

Notably, at this point children have limited to no access to any credible source of information while others are illiterate. This makes them predisposed and gullible to any false assurances given by traffickers. These comprise false promises of lucrative employment opportunities abroad and working within the domestic service sector. The children could be trafficked for multifaceted purposes and

it varies according to the children's genders. For example, for the objective of forced labour which results in them working in diverse sectors such as mining, agriculture and even begging, boys are the more preferable choice to be trafficked. On the other hand, girls are frequently trafficked for sexually exploitative ends and domestic services rarely for forced labour purposes.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Economic Opportunities and Employment

Often, considered a crucial push factor, whereby children often refer to it as a search for a better life. This normally assumes imagery featuring greater and superior economic opportunities that are frequently accompanied by improved standards of living. It is often assumed that children experiencing detrimental living conditions such as refugees, internally displaced persons and orphans would resort to migrating, however, the middle class is also not unsusceptible from taking up this phenomenon. Nonetheless, this demonstrates that regardless of stature and social stratification, any child can easily be caught up and decide to migrate.

In this case, the particular element of trying to find a better life is among the prevalent causes of seeking employment beyond the state. Undoubtedly, the overwhelming reality of unemployment further contributes to some children deciding to leave their homes. More so, it is not only the bleak reality of unemployment that steers them towards moving but also the discernment of their narrow chances of obtaining gainful employment within their states. For, children being generally impressionable can observe the difficulties their peers faced when searching for jobs. Also, to add to this they can view their family's financial incapability to provide basic needs for them such as education. Thus, children could easily perceive these multifaceted set of circumstances and prevailing conditions as a sufficient rationale to disappear from home in search of better living conditions.

Climate Change

Climate change, alongside food insecurity, has played a major part in being a key factor that triggers the movement of people and children overall. Even though African states are amongst the states that are less responsible for climate change as they have the least carbon footprints globally. However, they are still amongst the first to experience the adverse effects of climate change globally. Even though climate change is perceived to affect the world universally, the bleak reality is that the aftermath risk of displacement will be felt remarkably higher amongst poverty-stricken people and lower-income states. Notably, with the unanticipated beginning of severe weather calamities, it is the most vulnerable groups of women and children that are excessively at a disadvantage and disproportionately affected whereby, in the face of extreme weather conditions such as droughts, famines, floods, desertification and rapid deforestation that inevitably leads to depletion of resources thus necessitating the movement of children. This becomes more prominent when the existential crisis of insufficient resources is accompanied by the onset of conflicts within the region further calling for children to flee from the area.

PROTECTION VULNERABILITIES FACED BY CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

The number of challenges encountered by children migrating is often presumed to increase in equivalence to the amount of distance the individuals are anticipated to travel. Moreover, their journeys are often characterized by inadequate resources and a lack of legal documents not to mention, most are entering unfamiliar and precarious terrains. Furthermore, this increases their overall propensities to risks as most children are crossing unaccompanied by family and unknowing of the languages spoken in the area.

Arbitrary Detention, Juvenile Justice and Withdrawal of Liberty

Amongst, the numerous stumbling blocks faced by children migrating is detention. Whereby, across the continent, there has been an alteration in the norm of detaining children. As some states have made legal reforms to outlaw the detention of migrant children as is seen in South Africa. However, in other states such as Libya, the modus operandi is still incessant. Even though most states have been reforming their laws there have been constant accusations of child migrants being detained while on the move.

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This has reaffirmed the recurring occurrence of criminalizing migration, as children are often arrested and detained when entering another state. For instance, this was reported in Somaliland when unaccompanied children endeavoured to cross the border and were immediately arrested. In addition, in some states, children have been forcibly repatriated especially within Northern African states whilst moving towards the Sahel. Not to mention, some child migrants within Northern Africa were detained for illegal entry into the state. To illustrate, in 2012, the CRC concluded that, for instance in the case of Algeria, "asylum seekers and refugee children, including those recognized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are generally considered and treated as illegal migrants, and face arrest, detention and occasionally expulsion (UN CRC 2010, p. 16). Nevertheless, authorities resort to this as a means of tracing the children's families, hence further boosting the likelihood of family reunification.

Children are generally held meanwhile tracing of their families is conducted. Eventually, their parents or legal guardians are contacted and after some time they arrive and collect them. However, some state's lack of stringent return policy legal architecture has further worsened the threat of arbitrary repatriation and mass deportations. To illustrate, states like Algeria have been repeatedly condemned for deporting massive numbers of migrants not excluding children to neighbouring Niger. Nevertheless, Algeria in defence has frequently repudiated these claims and has stood firm in its claim to take any action to guarantee the safety and security of its citizens. In this respect, the CRC Committee noted: "the deportation of unaccompanied children, which takes place despite the provisions of the Migration Act (Law NO. 02-03) which provide for the protection of children from expulsion (art.26) and deportation (art.29) (UN CRC 2014, p. 7).

Smuggling, Trafficking and Extortion

Each of these aspects may be perceived as diverse in attributes but are similar in mode of occurrence. In reality, they symbolize a much unfavourable element to unaccompanied children. They are more vulnerable to encountering a multitude of threats that emerge in the course of their movement. For instance, children who have engaged in the services of smugglers eventually get caught up in a much more intricate international network, in which people are passed as they continue on their journeys. From this, the cumulative experiences of children rapidly escalated into a series of occurrences that were out of their substantial control. Such as arbitrary say over whether they should progress with the journey and even over particular aspects of their lives. For

instance, smugglers could easily resort to kidnapping and subsequent infringement on children's rights.

At this juncture, arbitrary conditions escalate to the smugglers either demanding ransom for the children which goes hand in hand with physical abuse, threats and sexual gender-based violence. Notably, these instances inherently develop into the children being trafficked or becoming probable victims of trafficking. As was explained earlier, unaccompanied children have a higher probability of being trafficked. For, children are generally trafficked for multitude of intentions such as adoption and sexual exploitation.

On the other hand, trafficking also encourages all forms of child abuse during their journeys. This is influenced by several factors; it can occur in the form of forced labour as a means of mistreatment. For, some smugglers can deprive the children under their care of water and even food while compelling them to be slaves. Secondly, the occurrence of abuse comes in the form of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. Whereby, gender discrimination also acts as a critical element, as most girls are more prevalent to experience abuse and violence from smugglers. Nevertheless, this does not exclude male children as they experience exploitation in the form of torture, forced conscription as well as sexual violence. Finally, human rights abuse amongst children has escalated to the extent in children are deserted and left to die. To illustrate, in June 2016, 34 migrants, including 20 children, were found dead near Arlit, Niger, by the Algerian border (UN CRC 2014, p. 24).

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In addition, racism and levels of education also act as key elements to human trafficking. Whereby, it is reported that 83% of children coming primarily from Southern, central, western, and Eastern Africa are more susceptible to exploitation in comparison to the 56% originating from other regions within the continent. Secondly, children's education levels play a significant role, as children who have not gained basic education risk higher levels of being exploited as compared to those that have obtained secondary education.

PROTECTION FRAMEWORK OF CHILDREN ON THE MOVE IN AFRICA

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) also known as the African Children's Charter was established to influence and propagate both the rights and well-being of the African child. In addition, the Charter is structured to particularly focus on the region specifically and establish measures and standards for protecting the children within the continent. It also bolsters the existing regional legal regime that protects child migrants such as refugee children and Internally Displaced Children (IDCs). Notably, the two sectors of children are each governed by separate international and regional legal architectures. For instance, refugee children are protected by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its subsequent Protocol of 1967 as well as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention of 1969. Meanwhile, Internally Displaced Children protection is covered internationally under the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1998 (UNGP). Alongside this, its regional equivalent is the Kampala Convention. It is important to emphasize that there is a complementary relationship between these frameworks and this relates to the fact that they each encompass forcibly displaced populations (Adeola & Mezmur, 2021).

Even though the ACRWC is hailed to be similar to its international counterpart the CRC, it even proceeds to fill in omissions the CRC has. For instance, it goes a step further by addressing a variety of categories of children that require protection. Such as the protection of children against Apartheid and Discrimination (Art.26) and even the protection of Internally Displaced Children Art 23(4). Nevertheless, the Charter is still criticized for having gaps, particularly relating to the interpretation of the protection of IDCs pertaining to Article 23(4).

PRIMARY PROTECTION PRINCIPLES ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Within the African region, the Charter has acted as a paramount mechanism to ensure the rights and welfare of the African child are extensively protected. Particularly, 49 AU member states have acceded to the Charter as of June 2019. The Charter lays out the four main paramount principles of children's rights that this paper will seek to address. Alongside this, even though the ACRWC fails to specifically address child migrants as a singularly standing category. However, it does have provisions which the article will explore that cover various categories of situations that children face. With a particular focus on Article 23 which addresses refugee children and applies *mutatis mutandis* to IDC's.

It is worth noting that the ACRWC has further inspired the subsequent development of regional child protection systems by Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Some RECs have already established these systems such as the EAC with its Child Policy that has its foundations based on the ACRWC. While other RECs are still in the early beginnings of establishing their systems such as ECOWAS and SADC are undertaking numerous strides to do so.

Principle of Non-discrimination

Article 3 of the ACRWC undertakes to safeguard all the rights set out in it for all children to enjoy them without fear of being discriminated against. Each child influenced by migratory movements, has the right to enjoy their freedoms and fundamental rights regardless of the child's or his or her parents' age, gender, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, migration/documentation status, statelessness, health status, race, colour or economic status (CMW & CRC 2017, p. 21). Moreover, the clause sets forth an obligation to all state parties to guarantee to all children residing within their jurisdiction the rights set out within the charter. This further demonstrates the principles underlying the rudimentary function of being applicable with specific regard to children migrating within the continent. More so, the principle of non-discrimination is at the core of all migration policies and procedures, including border control mechanisms, irrespective of the migration status of a child or his or her parents (CMW & CRC 2017, p. 22).

Furthermore, this ensures all children within the state's jurisdiction can enjoy the rights enlisted under the charter without attention being paid to their immigration status and citizenship status. This further infers the state obligation to ensure children are accorded their rights and are acknowledged as equivocal esteemed members of society. In order to fulfil these states are well acquainted with the fact that the non-discrimination right is not to be perceived as a passive obligation that prevents discrimination in all its forms but it should also act as a prerequisite for adequate and proactive initiatives to be kick-started by state parties. This makes certain states prevent the occurrence of discrimination by warranting equal and fair opportunities that ensure children are accorded their rights.

> The CRC placed three fold guidelines to act as prerequisites when determining the best interests of the child.

To illustrate, the African Children's Charter sets out in (Art 23(1)) for states to warrant adequate measures to facilitate refugee children the ability to enjoy the rights set out in the charter and even other international human rights treaties. This has further demonstrated the ACRWC's unique capability of elevating the category of refugee children onto a higher-ranking plane. It has further recognized the susceptibility and unique needs of the African refugee child while also coinciding with the second clause of the best interests of the child.

Principle of Best Interest of the Child

Often referring to the general welfare of the African child which broadly ranges from social, mental and physical aspects of the well-being of the child. In this case, every child influenced by movements such as migration is generally at risk of the mentioned indicators being threatened. More so, separated and unaccompanied children fit into the most susceptible category of having this principle violated. Further enforcing the norm that this principle should be particularly stressed when state parties engage in considerations of safety and care of the children.

Firmly represented in Article 4 of the Charter dictates that in all actions influencing the child, the primary consideration shall always be the best interests of the child. The Charter also highlights the open-ended nature of the clause that allows flexibility when applied by state parties. It considers all decisions to act or not to act that may influence a child should be undertaken on the premise that they translate into promoting the best interests of the child. Alongside this, it further demonstrates the Charter's all-encompassing ability that even the least detrimental alternative in the face of limited resources and options might be considered in determining what is best for the child. It also goes a step further to scrutinize the specific needs of children all the while contemplating the child's specific conditions and situations. For, on an international level guideline have been developed to act as indicators for state parties to ensure the best interests principle is adhered to. It was developed by UN bodies that include UNHCR in partnership with ICRC, UNICEF and the UN CRC alongside various non-governmental bodies.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child placed three-fold guidelines to act as prerequisites when determining the best interests of the child. It entails, first a substantive right: This constitutes the right of a child to have his or her best interests assessed and taken as a primary consideration in cases where various interests are being considered to decide for a particular child. Secondly, a fundamental, interpretive legal principle: if a legal provision is open to more than one interpretation, the interpretation that most effectively promotes the best interest of a child should be chosen. Finally, a rule of procedure: whenever a decision is being made that has a likelihood of affecting a particular child, an identified group of children or children in general, the decision-making process must entail an evaluation of the best possible impact of the decision on the child or children in question. States are thus required to explain how the best interests of a child are respected, in broad issues of policy or individual cases (UN CRC 2013, p. 1). This three-fold process demonstrates a standard set of guiding principles against which all state laws, policies and actions that affect their children should be measured against.

In regards to child migrants, it requires long-lasting solutions that provide definite contributions that ensure the child's overall growth, protection and survival. For instance, the substantive right necessitates the assessment of the child's best interests to be regarded as cardinal considerations, especially in circumstances where varied parties' interests occur when making a definitive decision in regard to the child. Secondly, the interpretive legal aspect allows for elevating open-ended interpretation of national migration laws and choosing the interpretation that effectively leads to the best interests of the child. Finally, the rule of procedure further imposes an obligation on state parties to base an evaluation and subsequent decision that leads to the optimum impact on the child in question. Undoubtedly, the state is obligated to cater for a means to normalize the child's circumstances and scenarios.

The principles of survival and development articulated within the charter are not relatively brand new aspects established by the Charter. In fact, though at first glance they appear to be completely distinct they are in fact similarly related in terms of applicability.

Principle of Survival and Development

Beginning with Article 5(1) of the ACRWC that states every child has an inherent right to life and of this particular right is required to be protected by law. More so, it is followed by a complementary Article 5(2) that obliges states to guarantee to the maximum extent possible the survival, protection and development of the child. Consequently, the right to life paired with the right to survival directly symbolize prerequisites for the fulfilment of all of the rights that constitute the ACRWC. As a result, to propagate and safeguard the well-being and rights of the African child, the two preconditions are generally applicable in all scenarios. Undoubtedly, both rights to survival and development both act as prevailing principles which predominantly bolster the *raison d'etre* of every right incorporated within the Charter.

The principles of survival and development articulated within the charter are not relatively brand-new aspects established by the Charter. In fact, though at first glance they appear to be completely distinct they are similarly related in terms of applicability. For,

upon close evaluation, they reinforce the need for state parties to adopt a comprehensive and holistic outlook when implementing both rights. To begin with, the right of survival envelops within it the right to life in all aspects of social-economic and cultural as well as civil and political aspects. This obligates state parties to establish conducive conditions and circumstances that allow for the respect of human dignity and safeguards the integral development of all African children. Consequently, aligning with the previous principle of determining the best interests of the child, the state is further obligated to endorse measures that guarantee an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in infant mortality. Not to mention, states should establish appropriate interdictions against extralegal, arbitrary or summary executions, the death penalty and scenarios of enforced disappearances. This further guarantees that states advance the children's right to human dignity which encompasses the overall physical, social, moral, mental and spiritual growth of the child.

Generally, state parties are also obliged to guarantee efficient normalized living standards and conditions that include rights to attainable standards of health, nutrition and even housing. While also safeguarding from torture, abuse and child labour. These two rights are even more applicable to children migrating within the continent as their survival and development are continuously threatened by hostile conditions of living, disparaging modes of treatment, abandonment and inadequate access to optimal opportunities to develop their potential. In addition, amid their movements, unaccompanied children encounter hurdles such as violation of their rights and arbitrary use of force by border authorities, exploitation and physical abuse by traffickers further placing their survival and overall development at risk.

Furthermore, the Charter's provisions oblige states to ensure children migrating regardless of their status are guaranteed a moderate standard of living that is beneficial to their physical, moral, mental and even spiritual growth. The Charter inherently validates the foundational interconnection of varied elements that feature the child's life. This renders the principle of survival and development crucial in highlighting the Charter's unity of purpose as substantive alongside its procedural provisions.

Principle of Participation

Undoubtedly, the principle of participation that translates to a child's inherent right to be heard is inseparable from the principle of the best interests of the child. Article 4(2) states that 'in all judicial or administrative proceedings affecting a child who is capable of communicating his or her views, an opportunity shall be provided for the views to be heard'. In accordance with this right and following the primary consideration of the best interests of the child, it is also secondary nature for each individual child to take part in his/her own determination in accordance with each child's needs and situations. The African Child's Charter further enforces this aspect by pairing Article 4(2) for the child to be listened to in all proceedings that affect the child alongside the child's right to freedom of expression of his or her opinions in Article 7. The Committee on the Rights of the Child propagates these aspects by stating that children's participation right is not to be perceived as just a singular act at the moment but a definitive basis for the outset of a collaborative dialogue between adults and children.

In relation to the establishment of state policies, measures and programs that affect child migrants in particular that allow flexible implementation of the participation right of children. The Charter's provisions further place an obligation on to states that ensure they deploy relevant channelling mechanisms for children to freely express their views. In addition, children particularly those who encounter challenges in expressing their views should be assured that relevant mechanisms should be non-threatening and child-centred. Furthermore, the ACRWC has reinforced this aspect by obligating states to not impose an age restriction on children's right to express their views. More so, in the backdrop of migration circumstances, states shouldn't place an age restriction that inhibits them to express their views. To illustrate this, states are required to implement sufficient initiatives that safeguard the right of migrant and minority children who are not conversant with the language spoken by the majority to freely express their views. In addition, states are committed to ensuring children can express their views without the threat of discrimination. More so, state parties are obligated to guarantee children having vulnerable and marginalized status are not discriminated against and that their right to be heard is safeguarded. This enables them to effectively participate in all aspects that impact their lives.

Generally, children migrating within sub-Saharan Africa retain their right to participation and to be heard. This brings attention to the urgent need for individual assessments and individual placings for undoubtedly when determining what is best for each child, a single general formula does not suffice. Thus, the ACRWC establishes this as a possibility by pairing its provisions of the child's participation rights and children's rights to freely express their views. For instance, about child refugees, children's participation rights require that in the determination of their status and in any aspect of providing durable solutions, the child's views should feature prominently (International Save the Children Alliance & UNHCR, 1999; UNHCR 2001d, para. 46, 47, and 50). More so, those assigned the responsibility to establish lasting solutions are required to solicit opinions and views of refugee children to aid in status determination. Alongside this, the views collated are required to be used in decision-making and the subsequent decisions made.

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RIGHTS FOR IDCS, REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN WITHIN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

provision. In this case, displacement has been caused by 'natural disasters, internal armed conflicts, civil strife, breakdown of economic and social order' or by any other means. This equates to the charter's recognition that protection from arbitrary displacement is paramount to IDC protection. The Charter refers to article 23(1) which reiterates states' obligation to adopt 'appropriate measures in order to fulfil IDC protection. It can be presumed it requires states to undertake a broad variety of measures steered towards attaining pertinent protection and adequate humanitarian assistance. For instance, states should undertake appropriate administrative, legislative, educational, financial, social and judicial measures which effectively and adequately respond to IDC's protection. This extensive range of measures is supposed to be aimed to promote 'appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance' according to

Article 23(1). Despite the fact that the article does not arbitrarily display an in-depth definition of what constitutes 'appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance'.

In addition, the ACRWC grants a specific provision in regard to family reunification in the case scenario when children are separated from their parents or legal guardians. The Charter in Article 18(1) affirms the family unit as the 'natural unit and basis of society' and guarantees each child 'to the enjoyment of parental care and protection'. For, the Charter states the child who gets separated retains the right to have information on his/her family member's whereabouts. More so, it obligates the state with the responsibility to alert the parents of a child apprehended by state authorities. For instance, in relation to refugee children, many state policies and initiatives affirm that family reunification is among the keystone aspects to fulfill refugee protection and effective resettlement programs. Thus, further affirming and acknowledging the family as a focal point in prioritizing family reunification as a cardinal and adequate response to instances of separation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- States should further endeavour to facilitate the identification of the multiple push and pull factors that propagate children's movement within sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, they should endorse measures that tackle these factors that inherently jeopardize their rights and well-being.
- Restructure and implementation of child-centred legislative policy frameworks within states of origin, transit and destination. To illustrate, these legislative initiatives should be all-inclusive and encourage the participation of all relevant actors including the affected children. States should ensure these reform processes should be unambiguous and promote accountability
- Facilitation of collaborative efforts to bolster capacity building between relative stakeholders to cater to gaps existing within government institutions and national legal frameworks. This is to ensure the principle of the best interest of the child is pursued and adhered to.

CONCLUSION

In summary, there are millions of displaced children within the continent that are constantly on the move. The study shows they are faced with prominent issues as they encounter continuous human rights violations which breach the Charter. For, the children have no means to enjoy their rights and currently exist in grave conditions of risk and vulnerabilities. Also, some are denied crucial elements of adequate living such as continued access to basic needs and necessities as well as secure living conditions. Moreover, the grave reality is that these harsh conditions of displacement persist due to prolonged and protracted armed conflict. As a result, numerous levels of forced displacement and migration within the continent remain among the definitive issues that plague the continent.

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2 CHAPTER

CHAMPIONING TRAINING, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN THE PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS CONTEXT: FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUPPORT TRAINING CENTRE (IPSTC)

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OVERVIEW OF IPSTC

The role of IPSTC is to carry out applied research, curriculum development as well as capacity building in Peace Support Operations (PSO) and responding to other complex emergencies.

The capacity building at IPSTC is conducted within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). APSA is an integral part of the AU agenda towards enhancing the structures, principles, values and objectives that enhance the decision-making mechanism that inform the conflict spectrum of prevention, management, and post-conflict recovery; as well as resolution of crises and building a platform for development in Africa (AU, 2012). Subsequently, guided by this platform, IPSTC conforms to the pillars of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) as well as the various structures that support the PSC including the Conflict, Early Warning Systems (CEWS), the Peace Fund, the Panel of the Wise, and the African Standby Force (ASF). Therefore, by working within the auspices of the AU and within the fulfilment of the mandate of the PSC, the IPSTC child protection programme is able to have an interlink of various stakeholders and actors within this domain through human rights principles and mechanisms within the AU and UN, and the interaction between international, regional, sub-regional, national, civil society and grassroots stakeholders.

The AU policies on Child Protection in African PSOs and mainstreaming child protection in APSA are vital aspects of informing capacity building through research and curriculum development for the training platforms at IPSTC. These platforms build capacity at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. The need to integrate

the AU commission's comprehensive policy on Child Protection within AU PSOs as well as the institutionalization of child protection in APSA and the mainstreaming of Child Protection at all intervention stages within conflict prevention, management and post-conflict recovery is key (AU, 2022). This is in line with Article 7 of the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) which highlights the complexity and protracted nature of intra-state conflicts in Africa whose theatre is characterised by asymmetric warfare, and violent extremism. This has led to displacement, separation from their parents and communities, exploitation, and other abuses of children. The AU (2022) identifies these abuses and lists forced marriage, gender-based violence, child labour, and forced recruitment into armed groups and militias as the main form of vulnerabilities that children face, and which deprive them of their human rights and dignity. IPSTC through its mandate and vision thus supports the AU call to member states to ensure that child protection is at the core of all peace and security matters at the national, and regional levels.

To enhance the Centre's visibility, participation, and presence in this endeavour, IPSTC is part of the African Peace Support Trainers Association (APSTA), and the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC). This partnership is geared towards promoting the provision and improvement of PSO training, supporting the standardization of PSO training, and facilitating collaborative research on peacekeeping in Africa that also enhance the protection of children in armed conflict. As a premier PSO training centre in Eastern Africa IPSTC's two decades of engagement in PSO Training has spearheaded the preparation of military, police and civilian personnel for effective responses to complex emergencies through conducting Applied Research informing evidence-based PSO related courses including the child protection course.

IPSTC research activities cut across the whole spectrum of conflict and activities have been conducted across the greater Eastern Africa region and the HORN. The evidence-based research conducted has been within the thematic areas of Gender in PSO and Child Protection focusing on the engagement of girls with armed groups; Countering Violent Extremism, Protection of Civilians, and State Stabilization in PSO, among other areas. These thematic areas have had an adverse effect on child protection given the vulnerabilities children are exposed to as a result of the dynamic nature of conflict.

CHILD PROTECTION

Humanitarian action accounts for 40% of child protection needs in situations of armed conflict this is because 1 in every 10 children is affected by armed conflict (Rahman, 2021). In Addition, the vulnerability of children is exacerbated further by factors that include their gender, socioeconomic status and age. This is based on access to education, food security, pandemics, and sexual violence. Their continued detention as minors as young as 10 years old goes against their best interests even under circumstances where their incarceration is a result of being associated with armed groups. The instruments that guide state parties against violations of children in armed conflict include the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols. In addition, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) principles stand guided by the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and the resolutions of the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC, 2019). State parties' obligations to protect children in armed conflict are informed by international and human rights instruments ratified by these states and established as normative legal standards at the national level (ACERWC, 2016). These are the instruments that guide the design of curricula at IPSTC through the Curriculum design section which is under the Peace and Security Research Department. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 may not have a direct clause that focuses on the protection of children. However, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1976), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) direct clauses which entail specific areas that children need protection. ICCPR guarantees child protection in relation to the obligation of the society and state against discrimination and their rights as a minor. ICESCR guarantees protection through the obligation of the state to guarantee safety, standards of living and access to food. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990) and the optional Protocols serve as the main instrument that protect children. This is through guaranteeing access to quality education,

legislative means, as well as social avenues that protect children against physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and forceful recruitment into armed groups and national armies. Further to this, the International Criminal Court (ICC) under the Rome Statute protects children against forceful recruitment into armed groups (ACERWC, 2016).

Child Protection Programme at IPSTC

In 2001, Save the Children Sweden entered a partnership with IPSTC at the Defence Staff College (DSC) in Nairobi, Kenya. This. This partnership has resulted in the mainstreaming of child rights and child protection mechanisms in all pre-deployment training for Kenyan Battalions undertaking peacekeeping missions. Additionally, capacity building on child protection has been undertaken at the IPSTC for UN Military Observers, UN Civilian Police and UN Logistics. Moreover, the First Advanced Course on Child Rights and Child Protection for Military Trainers was delivered at IPSTC. This course drew participants from all over East and Central Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, and northern and southern Sudan):

> *Before I was trained on child rights and protection at the IPSTC, my knowledge of the two was very traditional and quite narrow. I had very basic knowledge of child protection…*

Linking Research with Building Capacity for Child Protection in PSO at IPSTC

The Peace and Security Research Department (PSRD) is one of the four platforms at IPSTC. The department informs the training platforms through evidence-based research from various field studies geared towards enhancing child protection. The PSRD key objective, therefore, is to undertake applied research that informs curricula at IPSTC based on identified training needs for targeted personnel working within the PSO arena and the larger peace and security landscape.

PSRD works in close coordination with the Peace and Conflict Studies School (PCSS) – which trains at a strategic level, and the Humanitarian Peace Support School (HPSS) – which trains at an operational and tactical level. PSRD has three sections that include the Applied Research (AR) section that seeks to inform the prevailing peace and security landscape with current trends and approaches needed to address the myriad issues plaguing the realization of sustainable peace and security in Eastern Africa including child protection. This has been realized through the AR annual research cycle comprised of the research agenda-setting workshop, peer review of proposals, field research, dissemination and peer review of findings during symposia and field research reports (Occasional Papers). Dissemination is further done through policy briefs.

Curriculum Design and Development (CD)

The Curriculum Design section is responsible for the design, development and review of the IPSTC courses conducted at PCSS & HPSS. These courses are prepared within the IPSTC training and education framework which focuses on peace support operations and the African peace and security architecture, specifically addressing the needs of the Eastern African Region..

Simulation and Evaluation

The Simulation and Evaluation section conducts the following key activities within the research department:

Gather Daily Course Evaluations from participants undertaking courses at the Centre. This evaluation has a daily feedback form that looks into the course deliverables in terms of modules, facilitators (trainers), and exercises, among other daily observations from the participants. There is also an overall course evaluation feedback form that helps the Centre analyze the entire training and accommodation services based on the individual participant's feedback. The last evaluation process is a three-month post-training evaluation tool that seeks to measure the participants' development in terms of their capacity since completing a course at IPSTC. This helps gauge the effectiveness of the course towards enhancing the capacity of the target audience, especially in child protection courses.

Below are some examples of feedback from previous course participants.

Excellent delivery, use of cases (in group works), deliver question and answer in an excellent way. very articulated, one of the best instructors, full of skills and experience, very gentle and patient, and has a good heart for children so it makes it excellent for the course to flow interestingly. This course will help us (in our next PSO mission) to do it in a way it solves real-time issues associated with response strategies to CP during Conflict. full of real-time examples.
Course Participant – IPSTC Child Protection ToT Course 19.07.2021 - 30.07.2021 held at PCSS.

The content of the lecture was augmented by the practical short exercises on the evaluation done by small groups. It culminated in three participants giving a short topic which they prepared and presented to the class in three minutes and thereafter the class were given the chance to evaluate them. The competitive spirit of the three presenters was evident and the evaluation by the participants was objective and indeed indicated that they had all understood the subject of the techniques of evaluation.
Course Participant – IPSTC Child Protection ToT Course 19.07.2021 - 30.07.2021 held at PCSS.

i. **Collect after 3 Months Surveys:** The purpose is to collect information about the quality and the impact of the courses, advise the designers of future courses and the sponsor and count the number of participants deployed to an AU/UN or another mission.

Below are some excerpts from feedback forms of participants who have undertaken child protection courses at IPSTC.

In DRC (Kinshasa), the provincial ministry of social affairs, gender, families and vulnerable persons involved me in the preparedness of the local politic to respond to the street children as the Expert. In the coordination meeting with other partners, I encourage others to take into account the coordination with other partners so that the responses will be effective. In some centres, I recommended developing with the support of psychologist the psychological support.
Course Participant – IPSTC Child Protection Course 27.05.2019 - 07.06.2019 held at PCSS.

The course has opened me to new insights concerning child protection and has opened my mind to new exciting possibilities in the context of promoting peace and security. I am now able to apply the knowledge in various capacities in PSOs with child protection mandates.
Course Participant – IPSTC Child Protection ToT Course 19.07.2021 - 30.07.2021 held at PCSS.

I have been liaising with the children's department, judiciary, probation department and the police whenever children in conflict with the law or those accompanying their mothers in prison are brought into custody. We jointly identify child protection issues and find solutions.
Course Participant – IPSTC Child Protection Course 07.05.2018 - 18.05.2018 held at PCSS

Since I completed the course, I have organised in my unit an office where it accommodates young children, and expectant mothers as far as information or interviews are concerned. I have also investigated a case where a minor was defiled and am glad that very soon the perpetrator will be arraigned in court. I visited the home of the survivor.
Course Participant – IPSTC Child Protection T3 KDF & KP Course 02.09.2019 - 13.09.2019 held at PCSS.

ii. **Provide E-Learning:** IPSTC maintains an "E-Learning" link to Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI) from where more than 1,200 IPSTC course participants, as well staff enrol in the full curriculum of 29 various online trainings.

Participants are engaged in active self-study and are expected to benefit from Self-study courses in accordance with UN standards (for military, police and civilian); Access to the learning platform globally and at any time; Comprehending the theory and politics of conflict, war, mediation and negotiation and evaluating the potential for conflict in a country or region and analysing the complexity and limitations across cultures and diverse groups.

Capacity Building through Systems Approaches to Training

The capacity-building process at IPSTC incorporates adult learning techniques to ensure that the target audience receives the best techniques of adult learning as well as benefits from the specific course objectives unique to the personnel and nature of work. The IPSTC Facilitator Guide on Child Protection is therefore informed by a Systems Approach to Training adopted by the Centre.

Consequently, five elements inform this approach to training and include the Social Environment which accommodates participants attending courses including the Child protection course. To enhance this environment, various cues are taken into account to ensure that participants' social needs are met given the short duration of these courses are conducted (5 - 10 working days) (IPSTC, 2013).

Therefore, the need for name tags, introductory sessions, syndicate activities (group activities) and daily feedback mechanisms between the facilitator and participants are incorporated. The second element is the physical environment which is key to ensuring that the learning process is comfortable, cordial, well-equipped, and hospitable. This is because the courses are residential hence all aspects of the participants' experience and welfare at IPSTC are considered. The third is the emotional environment that seeks to ensure that facilitators and participants learn under conditions that encourage participation, build self-esteem, appreciates diversity and difference of opinion, and build a culture of authenticity during plenary presentations and the tasks assigned both individually and in a group.

The fourth is the cognitive environment that ensures that the adult learners see positive value addition from the training they are receiving in terms of relevance. The courses should link the acquired knowledge to the experience and application of the participant. This aids the participant with hands-on relevant and current skills that will enhance the protection of children in an aspect of deployed peacekeepers (both military and police) and the civilian component working in humanitarian aspects of the larger Peace Support Operations (PSO) Arena. Finally, the fifth is the holistic environment that IPSTC training provides to learners. This is necessitated by the multidimensional nature of the course participants the Centre trains. The course syllabus ensures that all components (stakeholders and actors) are factored in in some of the courses where child protection is mainstreamed as a core module (IPSTC, 2013).

Child Protection Course

IPSTC's child protection course is aimed at enhancing participants' knowledge and skills for the effective protection of boys and girls in peacekeeping operations/peace support operations (PKO/PSO).

Learning Outcomes

The course has six learning outcomes as follows:

1. To enhance participants' knowledge of contemporary PSO and child protection.
2. To enhance participants' understanding of armed conflict and its impact on boys and girls.
3. To familiarize participants with legal and normative frameworks for protecting children in armed conflict.
4. To enhance participants' knowledge and skills on prevention and response to child protection issues in PSO.
5. To enhance participants' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in protecting children within the context of a PSO environment

A vast majority of IPSTC course participants are men and women deployed or preparing to deploy in UN PKO and African Union PSO in a mid-level management role within the Military, Police and Civilian components and Corrections. The course also

includes other child protection practitioners working with governments, child-focused Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), academia and think tanks among others.

Child Protection – Training of Trainers

The aim of the child protection trainers of trainers (ToT) course is to enhance participants' training capacity to impart knowledge and skills on the protection of boys and girls in a peace operations context.

Learning Outcomes

The course has six learning outcomes as follows:

1. To establish participants' entry-level knowledge of child protection and training to improve their exit-level competencies.
2. To enhance participants' knowledge of child protection in the contemporary armed conflict context.
3. To familiarize participants with legal and normative standards for protecting children in armed conflict.
4. To raise participants' awareness of pertinent child protection issues in armed conflict and strategies for prevention and response.
5. To enhance participants' knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of mission components in protecting children within the PSO environment
6. To enhance participants' training capacity in order to effectively impart knowledge and skills on child protection to others.

The majority of participants in this course are men and women who have not received any previous ToT course on child protection. They are categorized into two levels of priority:

The primary course participants are personnel of mid-level ranking in the military, police and civilian components as well as correctional services who fit in any of the following criteria. He or she is/has:

a) Alumni of Child Protection course at IPSTC or equivalent
b) Engaged in pre-deployment training
c) Experience in an in-mission training cell
d) Engaged in training or holding training portfolios
e) Experience in peace operations/missions
f) Selected for deployment (especially for the police)

The secondary course participants will be mid-management level personnel who have any of the aforementioned qualifications, for example (1) and (4), but are drawn from:

a) Regional and sub-regional mechanisms, such as African Union (AU), International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Regional Training Centres (RTCs), among others
b) Government line ministries
c) Child-focused Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and the academia.

Course Methodology and Strategy

This course is envisioned to be a resident at the Peace and Conflict Studies School (PCSS). In exceptional circumstances, however, it may be exported to another location (resources and facilities permitting). Corresponding to the learning outcomes above, this course is structured such that there are theoretical lessons followed by a number of practical sessions. The theoretical portion will be delivered in a standard "lecture" format and in a limited fashion. The practical sessions employ problem-based learning approaches such as Syndicate Based Exercises (SBE), Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions, buzz group activities, guided discussions, role-playing, case studies, scenarios and watching of films/documentaries among others.

Course Evaluation Process

The IPSTC Research Department in collaboration with PCSS will ensure that both participants and course staff are briefed and guided on the course evaluation process. The evaluation is meant to ensure that the training and education delivered are done efficiently and effectively as it helps to identify the institution's strengths and areas requiring improvement.

The information collected provides feedback on the Systems Approach to Training (SAT) adopted by IPSTC. There are three types of course evaluations done:

Daily Course Evaluation

This is done by an individual participant. The participant will use Monkey Survey Software to rate the Modules covered per day against the preferred score. The scoring is based on the following criteria:

i. 5 - Excellent
ii. 4 - Very Good
iii. 3 - Good
iv. 2 - Average
v. 1- Below Average

The software further allows the participant to comment on the Module's content, relevance, strengths, and areas to improve. This information will be passed to the Curriculum Design section to track the course content and determine any changes required.

Syndicate/Group Course Evaluation

This is done by syndicates at the end of the course. Collectively, members of each syndicate will rate the course in terms of course expectation, course content, facilitation, and administrative support among others. Additionally, they will respond to questions provided under each rated area.

After Action Review (AAR), the findings from the previous two evaluations and other observations made during the course will be used to fill the course AAR checklist and develop a report. The report will be submitted by the Lead Facilitator to the Commandant PCSS who will further submit it to the IPSTC Director for information or action as necessary. Triangulating the evaluation process is critical as it provides deeper insights and information.

Participant Assessment Process

In order to ensure the maintenance of standards expected for the training, each participant will be assessed by the course staff and assigned a grading based on their knowledge and participation in individual and syndicate assignments.

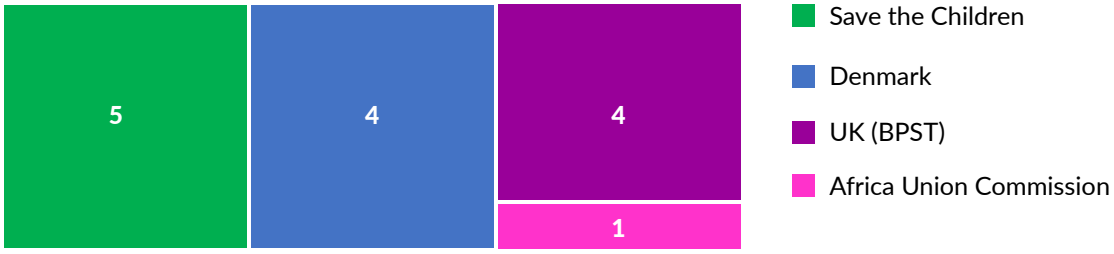
Course Validation Process

Ideally, validation is done 3-6 months after the course delivery to assess the impact of the course on the participant's job performance. The goal is to ensure that the training and education delivered have accommodated the performance and knowledge gaps between the initial participant level and of the learning outcomes articulated during the Training Needs Assessment (TNA). This is done either by sending a questionnaire to the participants using Monkey Survey Software and/or, where possible, through field visits. The results are used to improve the course content and methodology.

Training Output

The Centre has two training platforms: one in Karen, the Peace and Conflict Study School (PCSS), which deals with the training at an operational and strategic level. The other is the Humanitarian Peace Support School (HPSS) located at Embakasi which trains at the tactical level. This school deals with PSO training at a more tactical level. To add some academic vigour to our training the Centre has established a research department that deals with curriculum design and applied research. Since 2014, IPSTC has conducted fourteen (14) child protection and child protection trainers of trainers' courses with four (4) different sponsors.

Course Sponsors



Moreover, 332 participants, have taken part in the child protection courses at IPSTC.

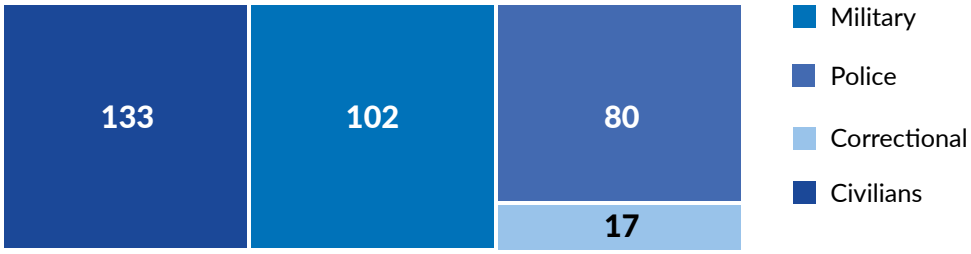
Regional Representation of Participants

Of the 314, the representation according to sex is show on the figure below.

Participant Representation by Sex

Furthermore, IPSTC takes pride in training the different components that take part in peace support operations.

Components Trained



Conferences and Symposiums Held Touching on Child Protection

Children, Peace and Security Research Conference

From 6-7 April 2022, the Peace and Security Research Department (PSRD) of IPSTC in conjunction with Save the Children through its project *"Protecting Children Affected by Armed Conflict in sub-Saharan Africa"* held a conference themed Children, Peace and Security. The aim of the conference was to promote and strengthen the interconnectedness of research, training, policy and practice to contribute towards advancing the debate of children in peace and security. It was geared towards consolidating cutting-edge research output carried out in various parts of Africa as it seeks to respond to the question; what strides are being made to protect the rights of the child in peace and security debate?

The conference provided a platform for various actors (researchers, organizations, academic institutions, policymakers and practitioners) to discuss and disseminate the outcomes of their research to larger audiences. In addition, the conference provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on innovations and lessons from the field and regional experiences and identify areas where peace actors and agencies in child protection have had a notable impact, and areas where interventions can be improved. Finally, it provided an opportunity to strengthen partnerships and collaboration in the areas of Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) research, training, policy-making, programming and advocacy.

The conference drew participants from the following institutions and organizations:

UN Missions	PSO Training Institutions	Other Training Institutions	Institutions of Higher Learning	Other Organizations	Government
UNMISS	Alioune Blondin Beye Peace School, Mali	Dallaire Institute Centre of Excellence	National Defence University - Kenya	Save the Children	Lamu County Government
MONUSCO			National Defence College, Abuja	Pan-African Research Services	
ATMIS			Maseno University, Kenya	Horn Institute	
			University of Buea, Cameroon		
			Dag Hammarskjold Institute of Peace, Zambia		
			University of Warsaw, Poland		
			University of Nairobi, Kenya		
			Daystar University, Kenya		
			Kenyatta University, Kenya		

IPSTC Engagement with Stakeholders and Actors in Child Protection through the Centre's Africa Amani Journal. The Centre's journal gives an opportunity for regional stakeholders to interact through journal papers on various issues affecting the peace and security landscape. This includes the child protection debate and the various vulnerabilities that impact their livelihoods in armed conflict and other complex situations. Some of the areas this journal has articulated this over the years has been fostered by various authors through:

Protection of Civilians in Disarmament Initiative within the Context of the African Standby Force (ASF)

Author: Kimani M. J. (PhD)

> *"...between 20 and 30 November 2012. At least 97 women and 33 girls (aged between 6 and 17) were raped and a further five women were victims of attempted rape in and around Minova, Kalehe territory, South Kivu province... [perpetrators] entered houses, usually in groups of three to six, and, after threatening the inhabitants, looted whatever they could find... [they] would leave with the looted goods and at least one would stand guard as the remaining [perpetrators] raped women and girls in the house. Victims were threatened with death if they shouted; some were raped at gunpoint" (Kimani, 2015).*
>
> *(Kimani, 2015).*

The phenomenon of conflict largely speaks to the question of the safety and security of people caught in violent conflicts. Briefly, 'safety and security of communities means the protection and securing of residents and their property, and prevention of anything that may threaten them...' The threat to safety and security is prevalent in many post-conflict situations, where 'humanitarian problems, issues of DDR, small arms and light weapons collection and management, security sector reform/governance (SSR/G), the rule of law, transitional justice, reconstruction and socio-economic issues...' present critical challenges to stabilization efforts and the realization of sustainable peace (Kimani, 2015).

The benefit of this paper to IPSTC rests in the problem addressed by the author; the problem of the disparities between diverse actors in the PSO environment. "When it comes to understanding the POC mandate. The lack of clarity effectively means that stakeholders working within peacekeeping missions, humanitarian and peacekeeping communities have their interpretation of the civilian protection mandate. This disparity cascades down to the specific activities implemented by the stakeholders. This gets complicated when the activities in question, for example, entail diverse components. The emphasis placed on the individual components, if not properly balanced, can result in disparities in the benefits accrued from the interventions. In the worst-case scenario, these disparities can be a source of conflict that results in the outbreak or resurgence of violent confrontations and ultimately insecurity" (Kimani, 2015).

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)...
can affect people of all ages. A child with PTSD keeps having scary thoughts and memories of a past event.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Children survivors of 2007/2008 PostElection Violence in Nakuru County, Kenya

Author: Jacinta Nduta King'ori (PhD) and Wycliffe Oboka (PhD.)

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health problem. It can affect people of all ages. A child with PTSD keeps having scary thoughts and memories of a past event. They find the event terrifying, either physically or emotionally. The symptoms of PTSD may start soon after a stressful event. Or they may not happen for 6 months or longer. Some children with PTSD have long-term effects. They may feel emotionally numb for a very long time. PTSD in children often becomes a long-term (chronic) problem. PTSD may be accompanied by: depression, substance abuse and anxiety (University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC), n.d.) In the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya, children were exposed to and witnessed various traumatic events. Some may have developed behavioural and anxiety disorders. The study sought to assess levels of posttraumatic stress disorder severity among children. The study was guided by Cognitive Behavioural Theory. The

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study's target population was 77,768 children. A sample size of 460 respondents was derived from 10 divisions in Nakuru County which were hard hit by post-election violence. The sample comprised 400 children who included primary and secondary survivors of the violence and 20 deputy head teachers in the schools sampled and 40 parents who took part in focused group discussions (Jacinta Nduta King'ori (PhD) and Wycliffe Oboka (Ph.D.), 2016).

This study through focused group discussions also reported that children had developed a fear of going beyond the immediate environment. Some members reported that there are certain paths children fear using especially those that are used by gangs and prefer using alternative longer routes instead. Avoidance of any conversation about post-election violence is common among children. In addition, deputy head teachers reported learning difficulties among children, higher levels of aggression, truancy, poor concentration and revenge seeking behaviors among children involved in the post-election violence (Jacinta Nduta King'ori (PhD) and Wycliffe Oboka (Ph.D.), 2016).

The study found a significant difference between the primary and secondary survivors in levels of PTSD severity with higher levels among primary survivors. The study found 51% of the secondary survivors had confirmed PTSD. psychological interventions should be extended to victims of the traumatic events (primary survivors) as well as those who observe the events occur (Secondary survivors). Also, it recommends that an eclectic approach to counselling be initiated among children affected by post-election violence. They include psychological debriefing and trauma counselling. Trauma counselling should be conducted with the aim of restoring safety, enhancing control and reducing fear and anxiety (Jacinta Nduta King'ori (PhD) and Wycliffe Oboka (Ph.D.), 2016).

Culture and Gender Based Violence in South Sudan

Author: Carolyne Gatimu

In the United Nations (UN) system, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Department of Field Support (DFS) and Department of Political Affairs (DFA) are tasked with matters of child protection within UN peace operations (United Nations, 2017). UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 1261 outlined *the need to have personnel involved in United Nations peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-building activities have appropriate training on the protection, rights and welfare of children* (UN Resolution 1261, 1999). There have been six (6) grave violations that are seen to indiscriminately affect children during armed conflict (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2013). They are:

i. Killing and maiming of children; Any action that results in the death or serious injury of one or more children.
ii. Recruitment or use of children as soldiers; refers to any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes.
iii. Rape and sexual violence against children; This refers to a violent act of sexual nature directed towards a child.
iv. Abduction of children; This refers to the unlawful removal, seizure, capture, apprehension, taking or enforced disappearance of a child either temporarily or permanently for the purposes of any form of child explanation.
v. Attacks against schools or hospitals; This refers to the indiscriminate attacks on important facilities that provide care and children during armed conflict.
vi. Denial of humanitarian access for children; This refers to the blocking of passage or timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to persons in need .

The monitoring and reporting mandate of the grave violations requires one to report the type of violation, the number of children affected, the perpetrator, location, date and time of the incident, nationality and other relevant information pertaining to the child(ren).

Regionally, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2167 outlines the cooperation between the UN system and regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union.

SCR 1261 (1999): Determined that child protection was a concern for international peace and security. All peacekeepers must be trained in child protection.

SCR 1612 (2005): Peacekeeping missions must monitor and report on the six grave violations. Armed groups and forces can get listed for Recruitment and use of children by the Secretary-General ('List of Shame').

Prospects and New Challenges

Unprecedented challenges for the protection of children living in conflict zones arose in 2021. The first nine months of the year were marked by a sustained high number of grave violations against children. The killing and maiming of children remained the highest verified violation, followed by the recruitment and use of children, and the denial of humanitarian access. Child abduction continued to increase, and verified cases were particularly high in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Lake Chad basin. Compounded by political, security and climate emergencies, the repeated waves of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continued to increase children's vulnerability and pose challenges (Human Rights Council, 2022).

The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) has precipitated the increased involvement of children in armed conflicts; both as combatants and casualties (Krüger & Hund, 2014). Women and children are the first victims of violence from the unchecked flow of such weapons and must necessarily be involved in strategies to combat the phenomenon (Heimerback, 2021). Illicit flows of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition threaten both civilians living in conflict areas and the peacekeepers who risk their lives to protect them. Children are disproportionately affected, left vulnerable to injury, displacement and death, as well as recruitment in armed conflict. Due to this factor, IPSTC continues to champion integrating weapons and ammunition management as a key pillar to support peace processes, with special emphasis on robust physical security and stockpile management..

In the African context, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) clearly outlines State obligations with regard to child rights and welfare. Furthermore, the charter defines a child as a human being below the age of 18 (African Union, 1990).

IPSTC through the PSRD has invested resources and energy into conducting evidence-based research to inform the Curriculum Design Section which feeds into the two training platforms. Through training, the capacity of the military, police and civilian components dealing directly with children in armed conflict is built.

In view of this, IPSTC through the Peace and Security Research Department (PSRD) has invested resources and energy into conducting evidence-based research to inform the Curriculum Design Section which feeds into the two training platforms. Through training, the capacity of the military, police and civilian components dealing directly with children in armed conflict is built.

Climate Change

While climate change is rarely – if ever – the primary cause of conflict, it can act as a risk multiplier, exacerbating underlying vulnerabilities and compounding existing grievances (UN DPPA, n.d.). Moreover, UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index reveals that 1 billion children are at 'extremely high risk' of the impacts of climate change. That is nearly half of all children. Sub-Saharan African countries account for the top 10 countries on the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI) (UNICEF, 2021). The climate crisis is the defining human and child's rights challenge of this generation and is already having a devastating impact on the well-being of children globally. Understanding where and how children are uniquely vulnerable to this crisis is crucial in responding to it. Children's exposure to climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses can be viewed using the following lenses: extreme temperatures, water scarcity, riverine flooding, coastal flooding, cyclone exposure, disease vector exposure, air pollution, and soil and water pollution (UNICEF, 2021).

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

MHPSS is a composite term used to describe any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat the mental disorder (WHO, 2007). Children experiencing life-threatening situations, the loss of a parent or heightened household tensions due to loss of income related to climate change have a higher chance of experiencing a mental health issue. Disasters can also affect children's cognitive capacity with corresponding impacts on their emotional well-being. In cases of displacement, separation from traditional lands and local communities can have impacts on children's education, cultural identity and access to social support systems (OHCHR).

Pandemics

Training and education vs COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines

Today, more than 50 missions are all in full crisis management mode and are adapting to a radically new situation while ensuring the safety of approximately 160,000 civilians, police, and military peacekeepers. Most of the countries where these missions are deployed have closed their borders and have imposed social distancing measures. Countries like South Sudan have asked the United Nations not to rotate new troops into their countries, especially from countries that are seen as high risks like China, Italy, South Korea, and Spain (Coning, 2020). Moreover, more than 80% of children and caregivers reported an increase in negative feelings due to COVID-19.

When COVID-19 hit, the Centre initially ceased all classes but gradually resumed classes and made them strictly residential. The reach-out programmes to the mission areas (after a three-month survey) to assess the impact of training also came to an end. The number of participants began to fluctuate due to; countries/missions/organizations and institutions cancelling invitations and participants testing positive prior to departure to IPSTC for trainings. In such situations, children, who form the largest part of civilians continue suffering in conflict zones physically, mentally and emotionally.

High cost of training, education, conducting field-based research and implementation costs

To facilitate regional field-based research has become way too expensive with demands to get vaccinations and covid tests, and isolations among other emerging issues. Avenues for donations have also shifted focus to critical conditions emerging from COVID-19. This has made it difficult to implement the recommendations for policy and practice generated from research to improve child protection in conflict areas. For IPSTC, it has been a real scenario when it comes to catering for the costs of conducting residential training for all the courses. This cuts across from standing to testing participants on arrival and prior to departure. Positive cases have led to the incurrence of extra expenditure on the victims' well-being until they test negative for the Virus and are fit to travel back to the missions/countries of origin.

Consequently, at the beginning of the pandemic, there were no virtual systems on standby to accommodate the positive cases. This made it impossible to have all the targeted participants attend the lectures. Local participants who tested positive were immediately sent home. Later, with virtual accommodation, participants followed classes from the rooms. The disadvantage is they could not take part in practical exercises and group presentations and therefore a gap in training output. Fumigation of the facilities was an extra costly exercise that had to be incurred by the Centre prior to and after participants left. Masks and sanitization came into the space as a challenge that took time to adjust to.

In response to the pandemic, peace operations are assessing which functions and operational activities are critical and need to continue as normal or be adapted, which are important but not critical, and which can be paused until the crisis is over. Essential functions across missions include patrols and activities related to the protection of civilians, convoy escorts and other forms of support to humanitarian assistance, force protection, protecting key infrastructure, and support to host state institutions and local authorities. Some missions have suspended their quick-impact project plans and are now reallocating these funds to support the efforts of local and national institutions to contain the spread of COVID-19 (Coning, 2020).

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3 CHAPTER

CHILDREN AS ACTORS IN ARMED CONFLICTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA - HOW RESPONSIVE ARE THE DUTY BEARERS IN THE PROTECTION OF THE CHILDREN?

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ABSTRACT

Armed conflict remains a constant challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa and manifests in several ways and is influenced by various factors. These factors include; climate change, poor governance and ethnic rivalry among other causes. States and all actors have the duty, obligation and responsibility to ensure that all children are protected at all times, more so during armed conflicts. This protection extends to children who have been directly involved as actors in armed conflicts. Attempts to integrate such children who have tangled in armed conflict back into society present special challenges and thus require the concerted efforts of all the duty-bearers if these children are to be redeemed. This paper is a desk review of the international, regional and national framework for the protection of children in armed conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the paper examines relevant court decisions to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the legal, policy and institutional framework. The paper will also make recommendations to enhance child protection in armed conflict situations.

INTRODUCTION

The world over, children face several challenges generally due to their vulnerability. A peaceful and stable environment is key to the achievement of child development (Kendra, 2018). Children are generally in their developmental phases and hence are entitled to support from the family and protection by the entire society. The available laws and policies are such that the State has a prime duty to protect, promote, respect and fulfil children's rights (Kendra, 2018). Conversely, children who find themselves in conflict situations miss out on their social and economic rights including education (Kendra, 2018). Their environment is chaotic in that, each person struggles to survive and fit, get to survive. Due to their vulnerability, these children's essential entitlements are easily sacrificed to appease adults and warlords. Resultantly, children who find themselves in armed conflict situations are exposed to double suffering (Wessels, 2002). Firstly, these children are exposed as victims and subsequently enlisted as actors in armed conflict. Simply put, some are abducted and recruited as child soldiers. Secondly, the institutions of justice subject them to retributive justice for crimes they were forced to commit due to their exposure to the harsh environment at a tender age (Sehmi, 2022).

The preceding narrative is neither a myth nor a fiction. In the Northern part of Uganda where there have been warlords such as Joseph Rao Kony's Lord Resistance Army (LRA). In 1992, a ten-year-old boy, Dominic Ongwen, was abducted while coming from school and forcefully recruited as a child soldier into Kony's Army. Dominic Ongwen's mother tried protesting the move but was killed. The young child soldier rose through the ranks in Kony's armed group becoming one of the top leaders of the armed group. He would later face trial at the ICC for atrocities he committed on turning 18 years old, even though he was largely influenced by Kendra Cherry (Cherry, 2018). Owing to his environment as a child, he was convicted of twenty-five years imprisonment.

The question is, in absence of the mother, where was society and the duty-bearers, in general, to break the chain of conscription and integrate the boy among child participants in armed conflict back into society? Consequently, all the children's rights, whether as victims or perpetrators are violated in the glare of the entire society.

Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the question of how to integrate the children involved in armed conflict back into society without exposing them to marginalization and stigmatization while according justice to their victims (Wessells, 2000). The paper appreciates the fact that there is a need for accountability for the crimes committed by child soldiers, without forgetting that restorative justice is key to reclaiming the lost in society (Wessells, 2000).

The Forgotten Rights

The paper argues that although children require support from the family, protection by the state and the entire society to achieve their rights, children who are involved in armed conflict do not enjoy this protection (CFR, 2022). On one hand, the paper further analyses the child's motivating factors for participating in armed conflict. As will be discussed later, poverty is a major driver in joining armed conflict groups. The duty-bearers are missing out on the picture. They are not seen addressing such root issues in conflict situations. On the other hand, the recruiters are motivated by the fact that children are cheap: that is they do not have serious demands such as support for family (Idriss & Kimani, n.d.). Children are innocent, readily available and easily manipulated. Research shows that children who grow up in an environment that respects the power and prestige that comes with armed conflict often tend to get enticed into the commission of human rights atrocities (Francis, 2007).

Children in armed conflict situations are divided into two groups: those who participate in conflict (actors) and those who do not actively participate in armed conflicts (victims). Some of the activities that children who actively participate in armed conflicts undertake include; mass killing, misuse and carrying of ammunition in an armed conflict, spying, recruiting other children as soldiers and looting from perceived enemies. While those who are not actively in the conflict play roles such as sex slaves, cooking, mine sweeping and cleaning (Francis, 2007). Because society disregards the principle of the best interest of the child such children tend to miss out on a critical part of their childhood thus increasing their chances of participation in armed conflicts (Cheryl, n.d.).

This paper is divided into six segments which will address the main research question of how to

integrate child soldiers back into society. To begin with, this paper will look into what is armed conflict, child soldiering, recruitment and the causes of armed conflicts. Thereafter, discuss the legal framework in place to curb such recruitment and protection of children living in war-torn areas. The paper will then lay a theoretical basis for the research question. The paper will also look at the plight of victims of child soldiers and child soldiers themselves as victims of recruitment into armed conflict.

CONCEPTUALIZING ARMED CONFLICT

Some of the activities that children who actively participate in armed conflicts undertake include; mass killing, misuse and carrying of ammunition in an armed conflict, spying, recruiting other children as soldiers and looting from perceived enemies.

Conflict refers to circumstances when the interests, needs, goals or values of involved parties interfere with one another's interests. To explain the meaning of armed conflict scholars, there is a need to make a distinction between International Armed Conflict (IAC) and Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC). International armed conflict is an armed clash between two opposing States or between governmental and non-governmental forces with interference by a third state. While non-international armed conflict (NIAC) includes internal disturbances, tensions, riots and banditry acts between the State and non-State groups or between the adverse groups, within a State.

The International Criminal Tribunal of former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in its judgment on the Tadic case defined an Armed Conflict as, the "existence or lingering armed violence between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State" (International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), 2008). We adopt this definition for this paper because most armed conflicts occur within States in Sub-Saharan Africa by organized groups. The above definition was buttressed by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), the body mandated by State parties to the Geneva Convention to give interpretation to international humanitarian issues (International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), 2008).

Causes of Armed Conflict In Sub-Saharan Africa

Several causes of armed conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa have been documented. They include state collapse, regional and interlocking conflict, the conflict cycle, lack of guarantors, inadequate and inappropriate mediation and misplaced humanitarian assistance. Lack of clear implementation strategies for available laws and climate change that harasses especially the pastoralist communities who turn to their counterpart practising farming violently to breach the gap.

I. State Collapse

State Collapse is a common cause in most sub-Saharan African countries and has greatly contributed to armed conflicts. When the African States acquired their independence there was a political gap that led to different communities wanting to lead the newly liberated states. The power struggle saw a lot of unrest even after the political seats were filled and to date, some communities have never recovered (Francis, 2007). This is seen through the attempted coups from rebels and civil groups. Sub-Saharan countries have had conditions common for coups such as poverty and poor economic performance. More often than not, once a coup happens subsequent coups occur. African States that have experienced this chain of coups leading to children being forgotten include Chad, Mali, Guinea, Sudan and Sierra Leonne, and Uganda..

In Sudan, for example, research shows that recruitment in the Popular Defense Force (PDF), can start lawfully at the age of 16 years (Wessells, 2000). As a result of the State decline, government authorities are seen funding militia groups that recruit children into the military during armed conflicts. Following a report by the UN Secretary-General on grave violations in South Sudan, recruitment and 'use' of children in armed conflict were seen as the most prevalent violation of children's rights affecting the largest number of children (Wessells, 2000).

In addition, most sub-Saharan countries have poor political, economic and social institutions to ensure the best interest of the child is met. Child neglect thus leaves children with no option but to join the militia groups to get basic needs such as food, clothes and shelter. Due to political unrest caused by armed conflict, there is under-reporting of cases of children being kidnapped and forced to join militia groups. People are afraid of retaliation or the backlash that may come with making such a report. In Uganda, economic decline and economic shock have been the major causes of conflict. In Congo, historical injustices, and natural resource wealth and imbalance have been cited as the main causes of armed conflict that pull children into the mix.

ii. Availability of Arms

One of the major causes of child militia is the availability of small arms, light weapons and ammunition. These weapons are trafficked in Sub-Saharan countries and, therefore, are cheap and readily available. In most cases, the trafficking of weapons is done across borders by land. Various routes are unmanned and unprotected therefore providing easy passage for those trafficking arms into war-centred countries. These routes are seen as dark spots where various states' rebels easily mingle with the vices.

ONE OF THE MAJOR CAUSES OF CHILD MILITIA...

is the availability of small arms, light weapons and ammunition. These weapons are trafficked in Sub-Saharan countries and, therefore, are cheap and readily available. In most cases, the trafficking of weapons is done across borders by land.

WHO IS A CHILD SOLDIER?

In the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, the majority is attained earlier (Article 1, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). A child soldier can, therefore, be defined as any person under eighteen years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular force or armed group (Francis, 2007). The involvement of children in armed conflict is diverse. The most common ways children are involved in armed conflict is as child soldiers or victims. As child soldiers, children are kidnapped and brainwashed. They play different roles, some engage in active combat, while others are involved as messengers and or spies gathering intelligence. Others are labourers for the soldiers while others are viewed as sexual slaves and sadly some are involved as wives of the soldiers (Ajibola, n.d.).

Recruitment of Children as Child Soldiers, Motivation of Recruiters

Recruitment of children into armed conflict is not new since children were deployed as child soldiers as early as during the Second World War and the civil war in Sierra Leonne in 1990 (Rosen, 2015). Government forces, paramilitary groups and armed rebel groups have been and continue to be the main actors in recruitment. They often abduct the children and force them into child soldiering while other children join armed rebellions voluntarily. According to UNICEF, one rebel commander in DRC observed allegedly that, *"Children make good fighters because they are young and want to show off, they think it's all a game so they are fearless" (UNICEF, 1999).*

It is evident that these recruiters prefer children since they are innocent, easy to work with, obedient and eager to appear better than others. The innocence of a child is in itself seen as a weapon and are thus used as spies since they cannot be easily spotted and used as manning checkpoints for adult soldiers. They are perceived as dispensable commodities and tend to receive no training before being placed at the forefront of the battlefield (UNICEF, 1999). Furthermore, some African communities glorify war and teach their children early in life that engaging in military combat brings honour to the nation and family. As a result, children become the first victims

of armed conflict. The question that begs answers is, where are the duty-bearers when the recruitment of children is on under their noses?

What Motivates Children to Join Militia Groups?

Expensive education has been attributed to some children joining the militia groups voluntarily. Some children see the militia groups as a safe haven where they will be protected from the abuse that they face at home, such as sexual abuse. Others, join militia groups in search of adventure, belonging, fame and admiration. Yet, other children join voluntarily due to the enticing wage they receive to support their family members. This means the child grows up with a misguided perception of what they are getting themselves into. Others are brainwashed to view everyone as an enemy. The question that still begs answers is where are the duty bearers when children's rights are violated?

EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM ARMED CONFLICT

International humanitarian law provides an umbrella protection for the rights of the child in the event of armed conflicts. The Geneva Convention of 1949 and the additional optional protocols of 1977 lay down a series of rules on the special protection of children who take a direct part in hostility. Also, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict 2000, the International Labor Office Convention 182 on the elimination of the Worst forms of Child Labor 1999, and the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court 2002. The preamble of the Geneva Convention 1949, Articles 34 to 37 of the Geneva Convention protects children in armed conflict situations.

The Optional Protocol to the Geneva Convention on the rights of children provides that States should ensure that children under the age of 18 are not recruited into the armed forces and makes such recruitment illegal (Article 1 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 2010). It also obligates State Parties to raise the voluntary recruitment age to 15 years. This mandates the States to take action against the armed groups that force children into joining or allowing children to voluntarily join the armed conflict. States are bound by the Protocol and are expected to enact legislation prohibiting and punishing both compulsory and voluntary recruitment into the armed force for children under the age of 18 (Article 2, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a

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Communications Procedure, 2015). State parties to the Convention on the Right of the Child are also expected to take legislative measures prohibiting the conscription of children into the armed forces (Article 38(3), Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The statute of the International Criminal Court gives the ICC jurisdiction to adjudicate crimes of involvement of children in armed conflicts and forceful recruitment of children under the age of 15. The court also has jurisdiction to prosecute such cases when the state is unwilling or unable to prosecute. The Rome Statute shields a child from prosecution for war crimes they committed when they were still children (Article 26, Rome Statute). It also provides that the mental element is key in determining criminal responsibility and punishment of crimes. Article 30(3) of the Rome Statute defines knowledge as awareness that circumstances exist or consequences will occur in the ordinary cause of events (Article 30, Rome Statute).

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is the primary document that addresses and protects the rights and interests of children in Africa. In its preamble, the Charter, notes that the African child faces various unique challenges and problems.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is the primary document that addresses and protects the rights and interests of children in Africa. In its preamble, the Charter, notes that the African child faces various unique challenges and problems. Armed conflict is one of the problems, and therefore, the African child should be accorded special protection. The Charter protects the rights of children in situations of armed conflicts by making International Humanitarian Law part of the Charter. It provides that state parties should take measures that will ensure that children do not actively take part in hostilities and recruiting of children. The charter obligates state parties to protect children in armed conflicts by taking feasible measures (Article 22, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child).

The Banjul Charter provides that every individual including children shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind (Article 2, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ("Banjul Charter"). Article 3 provides for the right to non-discrimination. All persons are entitled to equal protection of the law (Article 3(2), Banjul Charter). Every human being is guaranteed respect and integrity in life (Article 3(2), Banjul Charter). Deprivation of a person's life by another is a crime. The law prohibits all forms of exploitation and degradation of persons, not limited to children, particularly slavery, the slave trade, and cruel or degrading punishment and treatment are forbidden (Article 3(2), Banjul Charter).

The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups provides general principles such as non –discrimination, whereby child soldiers that have been rescued from the armed groups should not be discriminated against when they are reintegrated back into society. The state is supposed to take measures that will enable a child to re-integrate without any stigmatization or any distinction between children who have been recruited and those who have not been recruited into armed conflict. It also provides for the treatment of children accused of crimes under International Law in that they should be identified as victims of offences and not perpetrators. Therefore, justice against these children should be restorative, rehabilitative and consistent with International Law which offers special protection to these children through numerous agreements and principles (The Paris Principles, Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, 2007).

The *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons* provides for the role and responsibility of human rights actors. One of the roles to be played is coordination by establishing groups and programs that will be in charge of preventing activities such as recruitment and working closely with peacekeepers in creating awareness of the dangers that children face while in such groups. They also re-unite or place children in a supportive family environment once they are rescued from the armed groups. They help the child to re-integrate and fit in like other children of their age (Phuong, 2005). However, the number of child kidnappings and soldering is still rampant. The question is, where are duty bearers?

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Silencing the Guns: Locating the Children

Stock-taking of African union's responses to child protection in conflict situations. The African Union over the years has shown its unwavering commitment to issues of peace and security through the creation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which is the framework for promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa and through the adoption of relevant laws and policy framework. This move has remained on paper no impact has been felt in the lives of children in sub-Saharan Africa.

The next part of the study zeros in the legal framework in East and Central African countries that have had their share of violations of children's rights in armed conflict. The paper analyzes how laws in Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Sierra Leone are protecting children from taking part in armed conflict.

Kenya

Child soldiers or Militia Gangs

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the Children's Act define a child as a person who is below the age of eighteen (18) years (Constitution of Kenya 2010). A child soldier is defined as any child, boy or girl, recruited or 'used' by an armed force or armed group to serve the armed force or group in any capacity, including direct engagement in hostilities or war (Save the Children, 2022).

Kenya does not have any specific laws that deal with the involvement of children in armed conflict. The position may be attributed to the fact that Kenya has never experienced any major protracted civil wars. Despite Kenya not having laws dealing with child soldiers, Kenya is a party to various international treaties that have addressed the recruitment and participation of children in armed activities. Further, Article 2 (5) and (6) of the Constitution expressly recognize treaties ratified by Kenya as part of our domestic law, however, treaties are subordinate to the Constitution (Constitution of Kenya 2010).

The Children's Act is the only law in Kenya that expressly prohibits the participation of children in armed conflict. The Act protects a child from being recruited in armed conflict or any form of hostilities, the Act further obligates the government to provide protection and rehabilitation services for children who have been part of armed conflict (Constitution of Kenya 2010). The Children's Act provides that instead, children are duty-bound to:

i. Work for the cohesion of the family;
ii. Respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and assist them in case of need;
iii. Serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service;
iv. Preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity; and
v. Preserve and strengthen the positive cultural values of his community in his relations with other members of that community (Kenya's Children Act)

The question is if this is the status of the law, why do we have children involved in conflict instead of practising the above virtues for the good of society? The Kenya Defense Force Act also protects children from engaging in armed conflict. The Act provides that the only people who are allowed to make part of the regular force are people who are above eighteen years of age (Kenya Defense Force Act No. 25 of 2012). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which Kenya is a party expressly protects children from armed conflict. The Charter also obligates state parties to create measures that will ensure that children are protected from and do not participate in armed conflict. The Charter also makes a provision for the integration of children who take part in armed conflict (Article 22, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990).

Similarly, Article 38 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) prohibits the recruitment of children into the armed forces. Moreover, Article 39 of the convention demands that state parties should take measures that promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children who are victims of armed conflict (Article 38 (3) and 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Children in Kenya are not recruited into armed forces or conflict or armed activity, this is in line with the international obligation that Kenya has to protection of children and also the laws in Kenya prohibiting the recruitment of children in armed forces, conflict

or activities. However, children in Kenya have participated in armed activities through involvement in armed criminal gangs.

A study by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission of Kenya found that children below the age of 11 years are recruited into gang activities and these children are used as conduits in the transportation of guns, drugs and spies for the gangs (NCIC, 2018). Armed criminal gangs and militia in Kenya have a history of support and involvement with politicians who accord them protection and economic support (Simone & Opala, 2020).

Political and economic status has been identified as the primary cause of children being involved in armed activities through gangs in Kenya. A study on youth and violence found that children mostly affected by violence were those living in poor communities where groups of youths in these communities carried out gang warfare and crime for survival (Refworld, 2004).

Uganda

In Uganda, three major groups have been accused of employing and engaging children as soldiers in armed conflict: the Ugandan National Army, the Ugandan People's Defense Force and the Lord Resistant Army (LRA). The LRA was established in 1987 and since its formation, it has been accused of committing a lot of human rights violations against children. A case in point is such as the Dominic Ongwen story that was discussed in the introduction.

The Local Defense Unit is the decentralized form of the Uganda Defence Forces and is directed and supervised by Uganda's Peoples Defense Force. The introduction of the Local Defense Units in the Ugandan army was a result of the need to protect various infrastructures and establishments in the Northern part of Uganda. The Constitution of Uganda and the Children Act do not allow the recruitment of children as soldiers or to serve in any capacity in the Ugandan Army, however, children have been allowed to participate in the activities of the Local Defense Units provided they attained the consent of their village council (Refworld, 2004).

In 2003, children under the age of 18 years disserted the Uganda military, these children were serving the Ugandan army holding the ranks of regular forces. The army had in their service children as young as 15 years for the male gender and 14 years for the female gender (Refworld, 2004). The Ugandan Army has also been accused of recruiting children who served as soldiers in the Lord Resistant Army (LRA), some of these children were forced back into the service. They took part in military operations while some were used as guides by the army in locating the hideout of the rebel or the local militia camps (Child Soldiers International, 2004).

The Constitution of Uganda protects children from political, economic and social exploitation. It also prohibits the employment or engagement of children in any work or activity that may be hazardous or any activity or work that may be a danger to their physical and mental health. The constitution further clarifies a child who is protected from this form of employment or engagement, as children who are below sixteen years of age (Constitution of Uganda).

The Children's Act is the primary law that protects children in Uganda. The Act, when defining what amounts to exploitation of a child, is the engagement and involvement of children in armed conflict to achieve political, economic or social gains (Constitution of Uganda). Further, the Act prohibits the engagement or employment of children in activities that can harm or endanger their health or life. The Act lists the engagement of a child in armed activities as employment or practices that can seriously harm or endanger the life of a child (Constitution of Uganda).

Political and economic status has been identified as the primary cause of children being involved in armed activities through gangs in Kenya.

The Central African Republic

The Central African Republic is a member of the African Union and the United Nations. It is also a state party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Central African Republic has been engaging in many civil wars, and children have

largely fallen victim as armed combatants forcefully conscripted to serve in the various militia and rebel forces (Steinl, 2017). To eliminate the recruitment of children as soldiers, the government of the Central African Republic 2013 created and adopted a national strategy geared towards the elimination of the conscription and engagement of children as combatants in armed conflicts ("Protection of Children Deteriorated" 2004). Despite this milestone, children are still engaged in armed conflicts in the Central African Republic, the efforts of the government to end this vice have been limited because of instability and widespread violence in the country, and this has led to the increased use and reliance on children as soldiers and combatants in these armed conflicts (Spencer, 2015).

Some of the activities that children who actively participate in armed conflicts undertake include; mass killing, misuse and carrying of ammunition in an armed conflict, spying, recruiting other children as soldiers and looting from perceived enemies.

The Central African Republic has not ratified the Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Even though the government has placed restrictions on the number of hours and conditions that children should work under, the government lacks a comprehensive list of what constitutes hazardous work that children should not be employed or engaged to perform.

UNICEF noted with concern that from the end of the year 2020, the protection of children in the Central African Republic has seriously deteriorated, with children being exposed to serious violations like; murder and mutilation, conscription, and recruitment of children in armed activities, child abduction, Rape among other forms of violence directed towards these children. Increased hostilities within the country, which are conducted by armed militia have been attributed to the violation of children's rights. The government has been accused also of contributing to the violation of children's rights through its military operations in the name of Countering insurgency and militia activities (Adel, 2020).

The Central African Government to strengthen the national legal framework that provides for and prohibits the recruitment and engagement of children in armed activities enacted the Child Protection Code 2020. The Child Protection Code criminalizes any form of violation of the rights of a child in armed conflict, including the recruitment and engagement of a child in armed conflict. The question that begs answers is why we have violations of children's rights with all these cogent laws.

THE EFFECT(S) OF ARMED CONFLICT AT THE DIFFERENT LEVEL TO THE CHILDREN & SOCIETY

There is generally a loss of lives as a result of the armed conflict. Increased hatred among the warring parties. Despite education being a way opener to the enjoyment of other rights, children end up suffering so many violations in the glare of society. The right is wished aside. Children are forcefully recruited as child soldiers or are brainwashed and end up voluntarily joining the armed conflict. They are taken advantage of and used to commit a lot of atrocities due to a lack of understanding of what they are involved in. Integration of these children back into society becomes a nightmare. Other children have grown and rose ranks in the army, in some circumstances they are arrested and charged with the commission of heinous crimes. There is a lack of a balance between children's rights as well as children's victims' rights. Retributive justice is always the readily available option, and the institutions forget that an eye for an eye leads to the loss of two eyes, and hence makes the world a darker place.

It is worth noting that vulnerability is considered a long-lasting problem requiring positive action to remedy it. Children are inherently vulnerable since they always need protection from harm.

Perhaps the above consequence is explained under the vulnerability theory that the people who are factually susceptible or exposed to harm than ordinary people in the ordinary state of events such as children in an armed conflict

situation are considered vulnerable (Dijker, 2014). The theory postulates that the vulnerable need special protection than that accorded to the general population. It is worth noting that vulnerability is considered a long-lasting problem requiring positive action to remedy it. Children are inherently vulnerable since they always need protection from harm. Further, children in conflict situations are more vulnerable because they are exposed to dangerous and potentially harmful situations against which they cannot, cope and remedy on their own (Groot et al., 2019).

In addition, in cognitive development theory, children's thoughts and perceptions are influenced by their environment and the things they relate to (Groot et al., 2019). It needs to be appreciated that the role of the environment in shaping the mental development and perception of children on matters is fundamental to their appreciation of academic concepts. It is for this reason that it becomes necessary to recognize that a chaotic situation herein referred to as 'a conflict situation' fails to provide a conducive environment for the child to enjoy their rights.

The cognitive development theory is another theory that explains why children participate in armed conflicts. For easier comprehension of how mental development influences children's perceptions of ideas, this paper divides the theory into different sections (Moon, 2013). Observably, the mental development and perception of children are very fragile because what they learn at this time is likely to be very difficult to unlearn. Additionally, children do not make sense of things or their implications; they simply relate with them and appreciate them as they are without questioning the logic in them (Saul, 2019). This explains the motivation of recruiters' settlement on children as soldiers.

They familiarize themselves with the things they see and the things they hear as the case may be. It is absurd that for children in conflict areas, their learning process is interrupted by the confusion and chaos they experience during this stage (Abuya et al, 2019). This stage of learning usually takes place between ages two to six. This is sensitive age which determines a lot about the future behaviour of children. At this stage, for example, children do not just learn the concepts they are taught in school, they learn more from the teacher and the environment. The mannerisms of the people in such places, the general behaviour they are exposed to and the things they see happen in their environment. Thus, children in armed conflict situations, learn to become aggressive and poorly mannered, and this poor habit translates to adulthood (Van der Maas & Molenaar, 1992). When children in conflict situations are exposed to aggression, they later relate to such aggression as the modus operandi because their minds continuously learn what they are exposed to. Academic learning at this time also becomes a little bit chaotic because children become more preoccupied with the violence and chaos within the vicinity than with the information they are provided with the form of academia (Abuya et al, 2019).

The learning process of the child becomes interrupted hence the child instead gets to be more involved in unattractive behaviours and mannerisms. In the period between the ages of six to eleven, when children are exposed to conflict and chaos, they inherently develop unnatural characters in response to the situations. Basic education for children in conflict areas is hampered by the environment and the inadequacies children face during this period because children inherently develop characters, behaviours and mannerisms corresponding to their environment and the people in it.

While children have problems with concrete decision-making and appreciation of abstract concepts during this stage, their decision-making is largely influenced by the environment they live in and the mannerism of the people around them (Kendra, 2018). This is why children living in non-conflict areas would have a better understanding of life and life issues than children living in conflict zones because the latter have their attention drawn into conflict than life issues. According to the cognitive development theory, children at this stage are not in a position to make proper appreciation of abstract concepts and ideas. The situation becomes an abstract idea for them hence they cannot properly relate to it. In this regard, children in conflict areas fail to appreciate the natural usual state of life because their lives are constantly interrupted by unnatural events.

CONCLUSION

Despite internationally, regionally and nationally accepted standards obligating state parties to protect children against recruitment and participation in armed conflict, children are kidnapped, abducted and recruited as child soldiers. Others, due to reasons already seen above such as systemic and institutional failure to appreciate the best interest of the child principle voluntarily join child soldiering in the glare of society. Children are 'used' in armed conflict as soldiers, victims, perpetrators, informers, and transporters of weapons among other violations. There are limitations to data collection. Accuracy of data relied upon ascertaining the causes the figures of child soldiers are wanting. Accessibility to armed conflict areas is a nightmare hence inhibiting the collection of accurate data. During armed conflict and peacekeeping mission,s there is a lack of personnel that understand children's issues and engage them thus protecting these children. Instead, they are crammed together with adults in the course they are forgotten more than their very entitlement.

The recruiters are motivated by the fact that children are cheap, innocent, readily available and easily controlled. Research shows that children who grow up in an environment that respects the power and prestige that comes with armed conflict, are enticed into the commission of human rights atrocities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper thus makes the following recommendations;

i. The duty bearers should establish the root cause of armed conflict and put measures in place to address such causes;
ii. The existing legal framework with gaps noted above should be amended to capture these children's plight;
iii. Alternative engagement in armed conflicts especially for these children including education and climate change activities should be put in place. That way these children's mind will be moved away from conflict engagement;
iv. Employ peace mechanism such as education;
v. Children's strengths and skills should be harnessed through education to counter the vice, in other words children should be used as peace agents; and
vi. During armed conflict the persons attending children should be people who understand children matters, that is the duty bearers or the peace keeping missions dealing with armed conflict should be empowered to understand on how to deal with children in armed conflict.

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4 CHAPTER

DECIPHERING THE CONFLICT AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONUNDRUM IN LAMU, KENYA: APPLICATION OF THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK TO CHILD PROTECTION

BY:

DR. SITAWA MICHAEL MUGAH (PhD.), LIEUTENANT COLONEL JAPHETH MWASARU AND COLONEL RHODA MWASIGWA

ABSTRACT

Contemporary debate by academicians and practitioners situates conflict zones as disasters given the hazards and vulnerabilities that manifest during the conflict. This paper is informed by research carried out by the International Peace Support Training Centre, sponsored by the Government of Japan through UNDP titled *An Assessment of Disaster Risk Reduction in Conflict Zones: A Case of Food Security in Lamu County, Kenya.* Based on the findings, the study recommends that security operations be approached and consistently be looked at through the disaster lens and invoke the application of the Sendai Framework to enhance the protection of victims of conflict which in this study is specific to children. This would, therefore, translate to prescribing to the priority areas of the Framework which are awareness creation, disaster governance, disaster resilience and post-disaster recovery, that is, building back better. Direct interventions to enhance child protection would include the consistent provision of food rations to the communities, establishing school feeding programmes, and provision of emergency health services together with medical supplies. Other areas of enhancing child protection indirectly include initiating capacity-building programmes for the local community on alternative livelihoods to reduce dependence on rainfed agriculture, provision of farm inputs and extension services to the locals to boost food production, the revival of collapsed industries as well as the establishment of new ones to support value addition. The construction of cold stores to boost the fishing industry and the establishment of an Emergency Operations Centre to drive early warning and disaster response coordination should be done by the County Government of Lamu. These will empower households to enable them to provide for their children in them.

INTRODUCTION

The bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2011) posits that conflicts have a significant effect on increasing the risk of disasters. Further, disaster assistance from national or international sources could have a bearing in terms of increasing vulnerabilities of such communities. When harnessed effectively, however, activities in disaster risk reduction can be effectively used in the promotion of peace and the reduction of conflicts. Harris, Keen and Mitchell (2013) however observe that the discipline of natural hazard-related disasters ('disasters'), from both academic and practitioner perspectives, too often treats conflict as an externality, therefore, failing to take it into systematic consideration as a disaster. The prevalent global situation of conflict hurts food security. This is evidenced by the fact that approximately 40% of the food insecurity situations around the world tend to take a protracted nature than was the case in 1990 (FAO, 2018). With the world's population facing the challenge of food insecurity anticipated to have increased two-fold in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those who were in conflict zones still face the highest severity of the dual threats of hunger and famine (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2020).

An update by FAO and WHO (2020) with regards to violence and conflict, continues to trap millions of men, women and children in situations of extreme food insecurity. Efforts to resolve conflicts and promote peace must include increased investments in resilience building to stop and reverse the trend and establish lasting and sustainable solutions to the scourge of hunger. The hallmark of a successful peace campaign is the provision of or full restoration of human security which according to the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (1994) is defined as freedom from fear and freedom from want. The UN further defines it in a UN resolution as the right of persons to live in an environment of freedom and in a dignified manner, devoid of poverty and despair. Further, the nature and scale of relief and development support are shifting as states move to link the investment in disaster risk management, preparedness, emergency response and transition to projects and programmes that speak to sustainable development (FAO, 2006).

Effects of conflict on food security

The state of food security in the world, and specifically in Africa, has been adversely affected by conflict crises, which in the context of this study are categorized as disasters. The figure provides a visual analysis of Africa's fragility driven by conflict.

The above figure elucidates the status of food security in Africa, appreciative of the impact of battles that took place from 2015 to 2019. The application of predictor models by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network [FEWS.NET] (2021) further project a consistent trend in terms of more severe food insecurity, not only driven by conflict, but also by poor rains.

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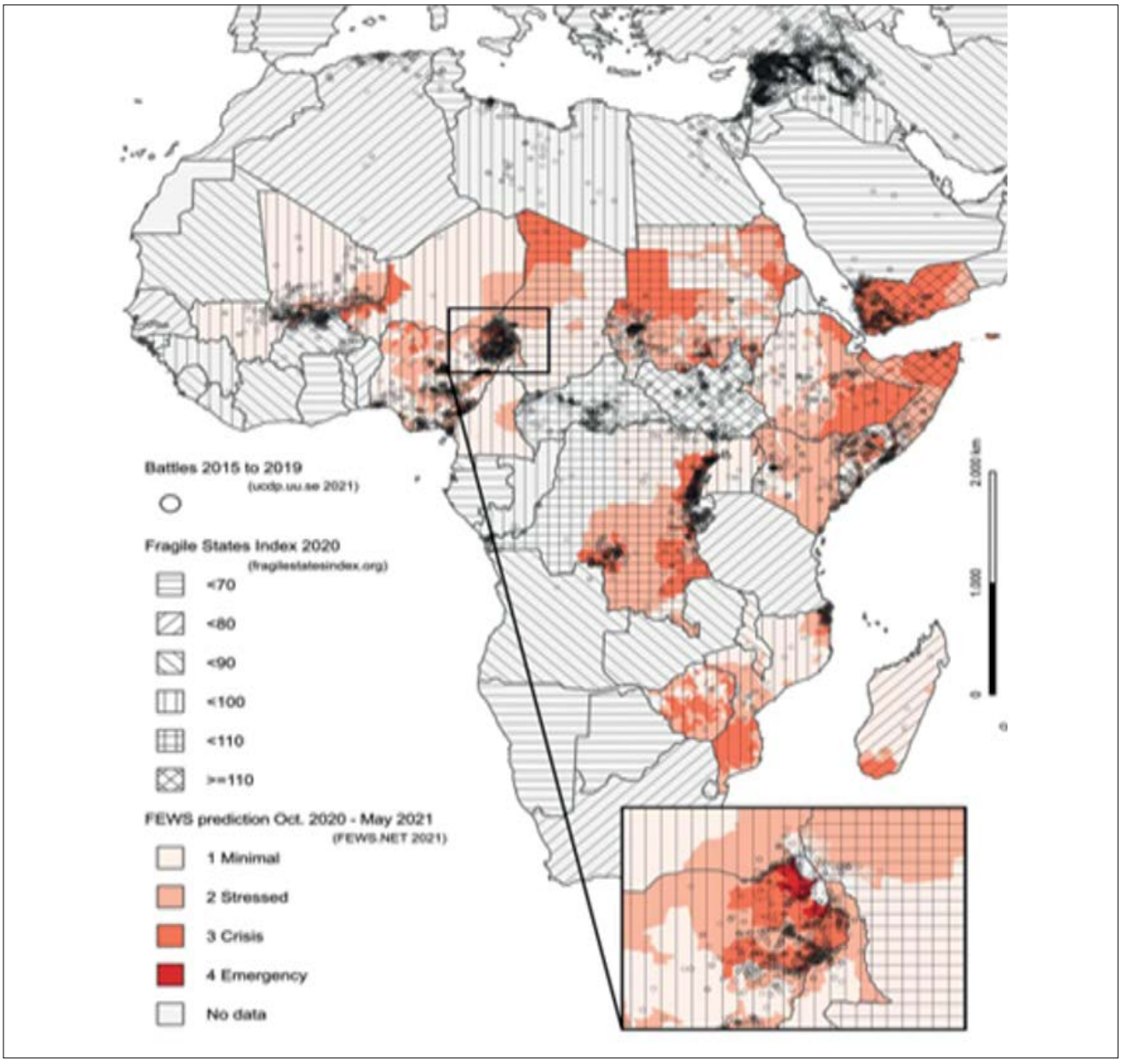
Figure 2.1: Food insecurity, violent conflicts and fragility in Africa 2015–2021



Source: Croicu, Mihai and Sundberg, 2012; FAO, 2021; FEWS.NET, 2021, Messner et al, 2010 as cited in UNFSS, 2021.

The above figure shows the status of food security in Africa, appreciative of the impact of battles that took place from 2015 to 2019. The application of predictor models by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network [FEWS.NET] (2021) further projects a consistent trend in terms of more severe food insecurity, not only driven by conflict, but also by poor rains. There is a nexus between conflict, forced migration, and food insecurity resulting in a vicious cycle for populations in rural areas. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report (2017) posits that, since the majority of conflicts take place in the country side, key agricultural establishments and assets such as livestock, land and infrastructure are targeted often significantly affecting the sector. For a majority of nations affected by conflict, unrest is majorly in rural areas, where an approximated 60 per cent of the population is domiciled (FAO et al., 2017). Breisinger, Maystadt, Trinh Tan, Perrihan, Bouzar, Sma & Abdelgadir (2014), in agreement, also posit that conflict often leads to the destruction of physical infrastructure resulting in security risks

ranging from availability of access to (food) markets. This, therefore, affects increasing food prices due to limited supply.

According to FAO and the International Food Policy and Research Institute (IFPRI) (2017), those who are in conflict zones have to decide between staying within the conflict-affected region that they call home or migrating to a destination and a future of uncertainty. Both options present situations that are high-risk in nature. Available evidence suggests that insecurity is the main reason why people abandon their livelihoods and migrate in search of safety. Food security, strong social networks, and better livelihood opportunities, in contrast, are key reasons people opt to stay where they are.

According to FAO and the International Food Policy and Research Institute (IFPRI) (2017), those who are in conflict zones have to make a decision between staying within the conflict-affected region which they call home or migrate to a destination and future of uncertainty.

Conflict zones from the perspective of the International Federation of the Red Cross [IFRC] (2021) are characterized by widespread violence and loss of life, destruction to societies and livelihoods, displacement of persons, the need for extensive, multi-pronged humanitarian support, the prevention of humanitarian aid by political and military restrictions and substantive security threats for agents in humanitarian operations in some of the affected areas. From the above-stated scenario, it is evident that the destruction of properties claims food storage facilities, farming inputs, and equipment/machinery among other important infrastructural facilities required for farming. Conflict zones are also characterized as volatile and thus become no-go areas for the farming community. The loss of life or the fear of the loss of it means that the farming community may either be advised to stay away from conflict zones or may voluntarily choose to stay away for their own safety.

Sena and Michael (2006) argue that complex emergencies are situations that manifest in disrupted livelihoods or threats to life which are brought about by conflict, civil unrest and mass migration of people, in which any emergency response has got to be carried out in a challenging environment with regard to the prevailing political and security situation. A combination of internal conflict with mass displacements of persons, famine, and frail or collapsing institutions (economic, political, and social) worsens situations by increasing people's vulnerability. It can be argued therefore that complex emergencies are also aggravated or worsened by natural calamities. Complex emergencies as explored in this study are characterized by three overarching issues namely; conflict as a central component, the far-reaching effects of intense conflict, and the need for intervention from internal or external actors.

From the foregoing exposition, the manner in which displacement affects food security manifests in two ways; first, rural people are not able to produce as their farming activities are disrupted as posited by Breisinger et al (2014). Secondly, food prices escalate due to a drop in supply, which is a trend in line with the economic principles of demand and supply. Sanya (2017) avers that the al Shabaab (Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, HSM) occupied Boni forest due to its import as an operational base to plan their activities. It was also of strategic importance as a source of food and water. An upscale in violence saw a massacre of innocent civilians in Mpeketoni in 2014 (Anderson, 2014) which left approximately 50 people dead. In response to this, the Government of Kenya launched Operation Amani Boni (previously referred to as Operation Linda Boni) in September 2015. The raison d'etre of this mission was to flush out the Al-Shabaab belligerents from the Boni Forest. This was in line with Article 238 (2) which gives the GoK express mandate to put together a Multi-Agency Joint Task Force (MJTF) to respond to threats to the freedom and security of the citizens of Kenya. The MJTF comprise of Kenya Defence Forces, Kenya Police Service, Kenya Forestry Service and National Intelligence Service which were originally scheduled to complete the operation within two months. The operation is still ongoing, expanding beyond its geographical scope as per the initial plan to cover Lamu, Tana River, and Garissa Counties (Sanya, 2017). Otieno et al (2019) observe that a wide array

of counterterrorism measures led by the National Police Service [NPS] such as proposing legislation, approached to proactive policing and regular patrols among others have been applied. Praxidis (2020) reported that the Government of Kenya [GoK] had by 2020 spent 50 billion shillings since the beginning of the campaign.

Compounding these tensions, many Kenyan communities bordering the Boni Forest have suffered the brunt of both the attacks perpetrated by Al-Shabaab as well as the restrictions that was instituted as part of the MJTF's security response in dealing with the security response. Because of the violence which includes sexual and gender-based violence (Wabala, 2017), villages were evacuated and schools were closed. Members of the community that were left behind were denied access to the forest, a resource which they rely on for their livelihoods. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present yet another challenge in terms of securing the livelihoods of those whose mainstay is tourism, in light of the limited or non-activity of the tourism industry (Ochieng', 2020).

This study provides an analysis of the effects of the conflict situation as it addresses the manner in which the killings, violence, displacement and restricted movement of the community members in the Boni enclave has affected children. It provides a chronological assessment of the food security situation before the conflict to the peak of the al Shabaab attacks, with its effects on children. Information on the food security situation with regard to interrogation of the four elements i.e. availability, accessibility, stability and utility is also unavailable, hence the need to undertake this study which has proffered explanations for the trends.

METHODOLOGY

The research study employed two research designs; the first is the Ex post facto, also referred to as after-the-fact research which is ideal for the study on the basis that it covers phenomena that are already in place and ongoing. The study by its very nature could not interfere with the research subjects in any way (Salkind, 2010). The second is the cross-sectional survey research design which involved a large sample size for generalization, with a component of qualitative methods which are premised upon attention to detail and in-depth analysis. In this regard, the research team carried out a general assessment of the food security situation in and around the Boni enclave, capturing views of the local community members across Lamu County which captured quantitative aspects of the study through a cross-sectional strategy during data collection. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were carried out among key informants.

According to Omondi and Sitawa (2020), a target population is a group that is of interest to the study. It is also referred to as the universe. The population of interest for this study included all the actors involved as well as the local community affected by Operation Amani Boni in Lamu County. The community (both indigenous and exotic) living in and around the Boni Forest was also targeted for the study and made the primary target. The study also engaged the target population of key informants from Kenya Red Cross-Lamu branch, Northern Rangeland Trust, World Vision Kenya, Kenya Agriculture Research and Livestock Organization- Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Programme (KALRO-KCSAP), National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), Office of the County Commissioner. Of interest to the study as well will be the Lamu County Administration's Ministry of Food Security, Cooperative Development, Fisheries, Blue Economy and Water Services. Local administrators, village heads and officials of beach management units also made part of the target population.

> In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, various activities have given rise to and driven the protracted nature of the conflict which has resulted to chronic underdevelopment, disease outbreaks coupled with natural disasters

Sample size determination employed the sampling table by Yamane (1967) as cited by Israel (1992). It posits that a sample size of 200 participants sufficed for a target population of above 100,000 persons. With the population of Lamu County as per the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) population census (2019) at 143,920, this is sufficient to ensure ±5% Precision Levels where Confidence Level Is 95% and P=.5.

Guided by the research designs employed in the research study, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select research respondents as well as the key informants respectively. The respondents who are the locals of Lamu County were selected through multi-stage sampling as it involved a step-by-step process, moving from a broad to a narrow sample (Ackoff, 1953 as cited in Taherdoost, 2016).

The study targeted a total of five sites across Lamu. Proportionate sampling was applied whereby three sites were selected in Lamu East and three selected in Lamu West. These are Witu (Pandanguo village), Hindi (Bobo village) and Bodhei in Lamu West. In Lamu East, Milimani, Mararani and Mangai villages in Basuba ward were targeted for the study. Faza Island is an exception that was considered a site of interest to the research since Fazul Abdullah Mohammed who was one of the most wanted Al Shabaab operatives (Atta-Asamoah & Sharamo, n.d.) is believed to have lived on the island at some point. Interview guides were applied as they were used to collect information from key informants through the interview method. Over and above the need to collect data through verbal responses given, the research team was keen to look out for the verbal spontaneity of the interviewees on the various issues raised (Sociology Group, 2021).

Guided by the research designs employed in the research study, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select research respondents as well as the key informants respectively.

A focus group discussion [FGD] guide was also put to use as the research team purposed to engage various informants whilst in a group setting. These were village elders, youth groups and persons living with disabilities as well as security forces engaged in Operation Amani Boni. FGDs were ideal for the study as they provided a rich discussion, provide probing as well as shed light on emerging issues during the discussion, presenting advantages that are not available in quantitative research (SIS International Research, 2021). The research team also relied on the use of images/photographs. These visual methodologies are used to make sense of as well as deconstruct the message conveyed in images (Barbour, 2014). This strictly applied as identities/facial images of persons in pictures were greyed out to conceal their identities. The study relied on auto-photography which required participants to take and/or share any photographs of their environment that were in line with the study which was then used as actual data (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton, 2017). To achieve this, the research team was added to various social media platforms set up especially on WhatsApp to facilitate the coordination of disaster response in Lamu County. Equally, administrators shared images of reports they received that were related to the disaster situation in Lamu County.

The research team collected quantitative information through the use of standardized questionnaires. The questions were closed-ended and in form of a 5-step Likert Scale to measure the attitude (Likert, 1932) of the local community on the key variables that the study sought to interrogate on various aspects of food security. The questionnaires were administered by research assistants drawn from the local community with vast knowledge of the areas assigned to them. For qualitative data, the process of analysis was carried out as the data collection exercise was ongoing. This provided room for constant comparative analysis which is premised upon the comparison and contrasting of information/data to seek clarifications to strengthen or oppose the existence of (a) relationship(s) as opined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Analysis of the photographs taken was carried out through the use of photovoice. This was strictly applied upon getting consent from concerned parties/authorities where applicable.

Upon closure of the qualitative data collection, the content was analysed thematically, which purposed to achieve three aims; examining commonalities across data sets, examining differences in opinions and views and examining relationships across the various target groups (Gibson & Brown, 2009). The themes were guided by the sub-variables in the objectives of the study. For the quantitative data, the questionnaires upon completion of the data collection exercise were cleaned in that the responses were checked for consistency thus substituting, or removing incomplete, inappropriate, improperly organised, repeated, or irrelevant records,

also known as “dirty data”(Allen, 2017). They were then keyed into the SurveyMonkey software and data sets generated in MS Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 23. The data were presented as descriptive (frequencies, indexes and percentages) in form of figures and tables.

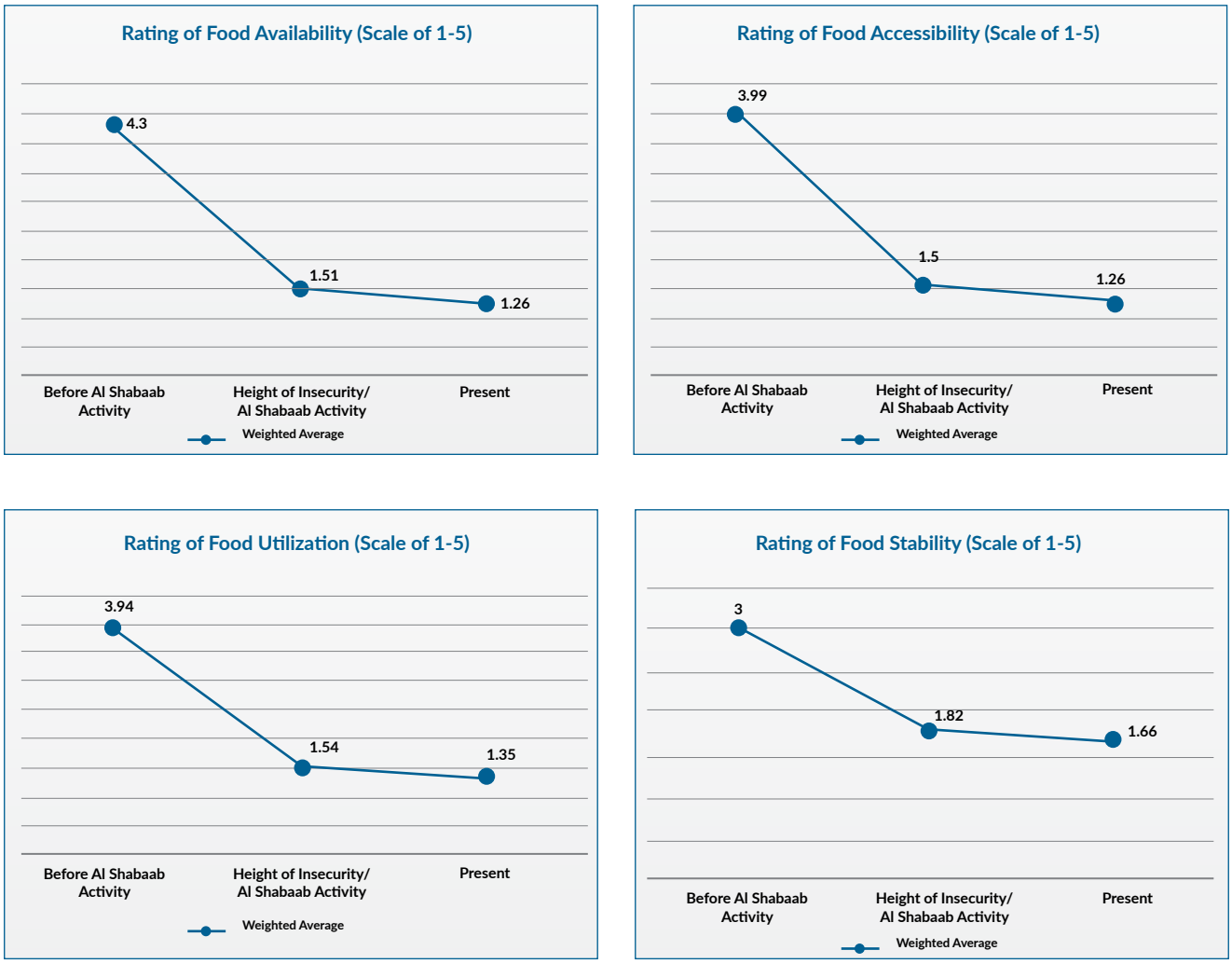
Over and above the need to collect data through verbal responses given, the research team was keen to look out for verbal spontaneity of the interviewees on the various issues raised (Sociology Group, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Comparison of perceptions on the evolution of the food security situation

The study, employing a mixed-methods approach, sought quantitative information from respondents regarding the rating they gave on the four elements of food security (availability, accessibility, stability and utilization) before Al Shabaab activity, on the onset of Amani Boni and at the time the study, referred to in the figures as present. The ratings were done via Likert scale of one (1) to five (5) whereby 1 stood for very low and 5 stood for very high and the following figures elucidated the trends.

Figure 1: Respondents’ Rating of Food Security trends



Source: Field data (2021)

From the above information, it is notable that in all figures, all elements of food security had a relatively high rating of an average of 4.07 (81.4 %) before al Shabaab activities were registered. A steep decline in the perception of the rating of all these elements was noted at the time Operation Amani Boni was being rolled out, which stood at 1.52 (30.4%). Further, the ratings of all elements of food insecurity took a further deep, though marginal at the time the study was being carried out. This came to 1.29 (25.8) of a possible 5.

Some overarching factor in the steep descent in the rating of food security was the conflict situation which ties up to the previously-discussed section on qualitative analysis. It also is in tandem with the position taken by *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* (2017) which posits that conflicts affect key agricultural establishments and assets such as livestock, land and infrastructure. Since the conflict has taken a protracted twist, it is notable that the situation ties up with the case in Syria which according to Gutters (2021) has rendered approximately half of all children below the age of five – 2.3 million – prone to acute malnutrition in 2021. Further, a total of 16 million people stare at the threat of food insecurity.

Effects of prevailing food security situation

Child malnutrition was one of the effects that were noted as being prevalent due to the drought situation whereby parents did not have enough food to feed their children and this had an effect on their growth and development. As previously reported, the prevailing dynamics as a result of the effects of the conflict situation, the COVID-19 pandemic, travel advisory, the ongoing drought situation among others have left parents in such a situation exposing children to the risk of stunted growth. Equally, children struggled in their education as many had to make do with one meal a day with the extreme being them not knowing when they would access the next meal. Cases of children collapsing in schools due to hunger were not strange.

> *Food is scarce now. For school going children, they take breakfast which is a cup of porridge and 'makoma' which they rely on so that they can have the energy to walk to school.*
> *Source: Interviewee 5 (August, 2021.*

From the above-mentioned excerpt, it is notable that there was a challenge of malnutrition as children did not have enough to eat throughout the day in order for them to have productive engagement in their studies. Due to the unavailability of other food sources, many parents provided meals that were lacking in essential nutrients essential for child development. Further analysis of the above situation in Lamu County pointed to the threat of children stunting in growth and development, an aspect that was cited by the 2015 IFPRI Report which observed that food and nutrition insecurity can be looked at both as a cause as well as a consequence of conflict whereby cases of chronic undernutrition become increasingly situated in conflict-affected states. Akresh, Verwimp, and Bundervoet (2010) also confirmed the negative effects of conflict on child development whereby in the context of the Rwandan genocide, children suffered malnutrition i.e. child stunting.

> *I was called recently to respond to a case in one of our primary schools where children had collapsed. Upon stabilizing them, they told us they had gone without food for two days.*
> *Source: Interviewee 6 (August, 2021)*

Malnutrition also affected maternal health and more so for expectant mothers. A balanced diet in sufficient amounts is essential not only for the proper development of the unborn child, but it is important in ensuring the mother is in good health. In the case of the communities living in the Boni Enclave, the aspect of maternal health is important as it has a direct effect on the blood count of the mother prior to delivery. It was noted that maternal mortality was a serious threat majorly because of expectant mothers in these communities being anaemic. Transfusion at the time of delivery was therefore mandatory. The process of transfusion requires the establishment of the mother's blood group. The study found that due to a lack of testing facilities in Lamu County, many women succumbed to blood loss during delivery.

> *Poor diet has rendered most of our expectant mothers with very low blood count. Before women go into delivery, they are required to have a Haemoglobin (HB) count of 12. You find women here with a HB count of between 4 and 5.*

When such a lady goes into delivery, it is normally very tricky as not only is her blood count low, but her blood group is not known so transfusion is not possible. We also do not have facilities in Lamu to test for establishment of blood group so we experience high maternal mortality. What we now do is to advise them to go to Hindi to have their blood samples taken for purposes of establishing their blood group. We then have enough time to send the samples to Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret. In the meantime, we tell them to get at least 7 blood donors who will donate in advance and have the hospital record those pints under their names.

Source: Interviewee 4 (August, 2021)

From the above excerpt, it is notable that maternal health is a challenge, especially with regard to the health of mothers, occasioned by poor nutrition which translates to a low HB count. Blood loss during childbirth predisposes mothers to fatality. Precautionary measures have been made to advise expectant mothers to have their blood groups established and have donors ready to give pints of blood that they may use during delivery in case there is a need. Chi, Bulage, Urdal and Sundby (2015) are of a similar opinion informed by a study carried out in Burundi and Northern Uganda which situates armed conflicts as a threat to public health posing significant hurdles to health systems with the most affected services being maternal and reproductive health. A study carried out by Boerma, T., et al (2019) dubbed *'Armed conflicts and national trends in reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health in sub-Saharan Africa: what can national health surveys tell us?* revealed substantive data supporting a negative association between trends and levels of national indicators of service coverage of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH), child growth and under-5 mortality with armed conflict.

Another effect of the food security situation in Lamu is the increased prevalence of early marriage. This is brought about by the need for families to get income from dowry paid to them for their girls. The study found that the reason why families married girls off at an early age was to reduce the number or dependents in the households. The resultant effect of this was child and teenage pregnancies. Lack of, as well as the inability to afford family planning services also led to poor family planning whereby not only were the women married off early, but also child spacing was not possible.

Child marriage is quite high. At the age of 18, it is not uncommon to find women with five children… people also do not plan families. You will find that people have to be back in the villages from as early as 3 to 4 pm because of fear of being caught by al Shabaab or running into trouble with KDF. They therefore have plenty of idle time. What do you expect? the result is all those kids you see their women with.

Source: FGD 4 (August, 2021)

From the above statements, it is evident that poverty was a result of a lack of means of livelihood majorly dependent on food production. It then pushed families to marry off their children early making them predisposed to unplanned families. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that locals got back to villages way before dusk in a bid to avoid running into the security agencies and al-Shabaab terrorist groups. With idle time, most locals ended up engaging in sex which results in unplanned pregnancies. According to Girls Not Brides (2020), the above-discussed point is noted as an occurrence that families are pushed to engage in upon breadwinners being forced out of employment and economic sustenance during crisis times. Cases are reported to have increased in Yemen and South Sudan. They view child marriage as a way to ease or alleviate economic and financial difficulties as well as a temporary coping strategy to provide financial security for the girl and her family. In such cases, child marriage takes place within the context of a financial transaction which is carried out on the basis of short-term economic gain/relief. In as much as the problem is serious, it receives minimal funding with statistics indicating 0.12% of all humanitarian funding is hived off from the domestic violence kitty.

The food security situation has led to conflict between herders and farmers as they both seek to protect their sources of livelihood. Due to animals invading farms, the study findings revealed the

existence of retaliatory attacks by aggrieved farmers as negatively affecting access to food. Affected farmers would either attack herders or deliberately target the herds of livestock. The resultant effect was retaliation from the herder community leading to injury and sometimes death of the parties involved. Conflicts of this nature have sometimes been posted on social media, further exacerbating inter-community acrimony. The effect on food security manifests when those involved in the conflict are not able to fend for their families either due to disabilities caused by conflict, imprisonment for engaging in violence or death thus permanent unavailability to engage in production. Brottem (2021) in agreement with the above state of affairs observes that in West and Central Africa crop damage has been identified as the most common trigger of farmer-herder conflict whereby passing livestock invade farms leading to crop destruction. This trend has steadily increased over the past 10 years mainly in central Mali, Nigeria and northern Burkina Faso. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (2018) as cited by Brettom further highlights that since 2010, over 15,000 deaths have occurred that are traceable to farmer-herder violence with half of the killings taking place since 2018.

It is worth noting that there were cases whereby children also bore the brunt of the herder-farmer conflicts. When herders and farmers differed and it got violent, children of the farmer communities who by default were in the conflict theatre. It was therefore noted that in one of the cases, one herder whose livestock had been slashed by a farmer accosted the child of the farmer and chopped off her fingers using an axe. Images of the above are shown.

Increased prostitution was reported as one of the effects of the food security situation that was witnessed across Lamu with most of it being considered as 'sex for food'. Women and girls were forced to trade their bodies as a last resort due to a lack of decent work (for women). They did this to get income to feed their families. For girls especially, the inability of parents to meet various needs such as school fees, sanitary pads and so on left them no option but to engage in prostitution in order to meet these needs.

> *If you are keen enough as you pass that jetty, there are women with children. Those are sex workers. When one gets a client, what happens is that the lady will leave her kids with her friends and go to attend to the client and return. When her friends get clients, she also will watch over their children.*
> *Source: Interviewee 19 (September, 2021)*

> *When you go to school to talk to children, when you ask them how many have had sex before, almost all raise their hands. You will see young ladies in school during the day. At night when we are carrying out our HIV programme targeting sex workers, the same girls will be there among the beneficiaries asking for condoms and lubricating gel. When you ask why they are there, they openly say their parents told them to fend for their own fees if they want to continue studying.*
> *Source: Interviewee 18 (September, 2021)*

From the above excerpts, it is evident that sex is being used as an income earner for women and girls because they need to meet their needs. In the first excerpt, women go for sex work with their children which paints a picture of desperation in that these women even lack resources to have a caregiver take care of their children as they go about their business. They also lack the social capital with whom they can entrust their children as they are out on sex work. The second excerpt shows a society that has somewhat accepted the reality that sex work can pay and girls can actually fend for themselves by selling their bodies. Students in school are not ashamed to show that they are sexually active. Notable as well is the push the girls get by the parent(s) to fend for themselves knowing too well that these girls lack significant/valuable skills to trade in order to raise enough to pay fees. These parents push their girls to engage in the sex trade. The same scenario was pointed out for men and boys who engaged in acts of sodomy in order to meet their needs. Young men were mostly enticed through cash and gifts in order to engage in such acts.

> *I tell you, some of the boys you see riding motorbikes have earned them through sleeping with men. Some visitors ask the boys to sleep with them in return for 60,000 shillings in cash to buy a motorcycle. For the boys to accept, they are sometimes given drugs so that they are no longer in their senses as they engage in the act.*
> *Source: Interviewee 20 (September, 2021)*

From the above excerpts, men and boys are engaging in prostitution due to the contracted economy, increased cost of leaving and scarcity of food. For those who get offers to engage in same-sex in exchange for a motorcycle, the thought in their mind is the actual opportunity for constant income which would allow them to join the bodaboda (motorbike) business. This would enable them to put food on the table as well as meet other needs on a day-to-day basis. The trend in prostitution, be it heterosexual or bi-sexual is an issue of concern because it has the potential to contribute to the increase in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS as well as other sexually transmitted diseases. The HIV and AIDS prevalence rate in Lamu which before 2015 stood at 1.6 per cent was noted to be on a steady increase hitting 2.6 per cent in 2017 before rising further to 3 per cent in 2018 according to the County Committee on HIV/AIDS as cited by Cheti, P (2019). The situation is further worsened by the shunning of the use of condoms whereby only 40 per cent of adults in Lamu engaged in protected sex. A study that reveals factors that are in tandem with the goings on in Lamu is one by Becker, Balakireva, Pavlova, Isac, Cheuk, Roberts & Pickles (2019) who in their research on HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C virus (HCV) epidemics in Dnipro, Eastern Ukraine draw an interrelationship between conflict and the spread of the above-mentioned diseases. Their study illustrates how several factors present in Ukraine at the time of research lead to an increase in HIV. These factors include migration, increased interaction between military and civilian as well as civilian-to-civilian population socializing, families break ups, and increased sexual relations, either casual or transactional. They relied on mathematical modelling, observation, and ethnography as techniques to present their case.

The targeting and killing of men were another dimensions that affected the elements of availability, stability and accessibility to food security in a number of ways. The al Shabaab's strategy of beheading their victims in public instilled a tremendous amount of fear in the population. The terror group would round up able-bodied men and ask them to recite Islam prayers, especially the Shahadah, or recite verses of the Quran. If they were not able to do so, then they were beheaded. The effect of this was that men, who were the breadwinners of their homes were no longer available to fend for their family's nutritional needs either in their capacity as farmers or as income earners to facilitate the purchase of food. Further, the latent manifestation of food insecurity caused by the lack of a male/husband in the home was the challenge of single-parenthood. Women found themselves widowed with children to take care of. In view of the fact that the majority of the spouses to the victims were housewives, they had neither means of securing food nor income to meet the demands of their dependants, thus exposing such dependants to food insecurity. This scenario was enacted by interviewee 14:

> *In Jima area in 2018, there was a gruesome attack carried out on one village. The al Shabaab dressed in KDF uniform lined up all the women and children on one side and the men on the other. They then went ahead to behead the men in full glare of their families after which they collected the heads and dumped them in one heap. The aim was to create even more trauma to the family members as they would be going about matching the heads to the bodies in preparation for burial. The situation of widowhood thereafter was a serious issue of concern due to households lack of the breadwinner in those homes.*
> *Source: Interviewee 14 (September, 2021)*

It would appear that the al Shabaab used beheading as a tactic to perpetuate their asymmetric war. The manifest function of their activity was to create fear among the locals of non-Muslim faith as well as to protest against the presence of Kenyan troops under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

forces in Somalia. Decapitation according to Cengiz (n.d.) in his article '*Beheading As a Signature Method of Jihadist Terrorism From Syria to France*' affirms that is a tactic that is aimed at attracting attention for authorities, gain recognition as a force to reckon with, intimidate people and spread panic and fear. The beheading of men denied the community the necessary labour needed to ensure food security in the study area. The death of men in conflict zones is significant within food security discourse because as Eck and Hanni (2013) have argued, previous studies have only reported the fatalities without making a mention of the implications of such occurrences on other sectors of human life. Available evidence suggests that men are in fact far more prone to victimization in conflict zones compared to women. In spite of this fact, the concept of male victimhood has been granted minimum focus, particularly as it relates to the subject of food security, hence its inclusion in this study.

Of interest to the research study were the challenges that emerged as impeding the optimum delivery of relief supplies and services to the local community. This was in view of the fact that there was a rather poor rating on the effectiveness and availability of these vital interventions. Study participants in this regard pointed to a number of challenges. One of the challenges was that the road through Lamu East was unsafe as the al Shabaab terror group often had improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted on the roads; an asymmetric strategy of war that they had employed. As a result, the area was not easily accessible by aid agencies acting in their various capacities either as governmental or non-governmental organizations.

> *Accessing the place is not easy. It is very unsafe by road. The KDF does not let anyone through. Red Cross vehicles are allowed to go through. You really require to have a heart to serve the people. As you drive through, you see shells of vehicles that have been hit by the explosive devices.*
> *Source: Interviewee 4 (August, 2021)*

> *When schools closed, school children hiked a ride from KDF. AS targeted the convoy, hitting the lorry and killing 4 of 34 kids on board. On learning that they (al Shabaab) had killed some children, they visited the village that night to apologize.*
> *Source: Interviewee 6 (August, 2021)*

From interview no. 4 above it is evident that the IED threat had forced security forces to cordon off the Lamu East area in order to avoid any casualties or fatalities as a result of such devices. This style of warfare has resulted in aid organizations staying away from the area or operating with minimum staff, especially the external ones. All these issues had an effect on the optimum delivery of services.

Interview No. 6 above paints a picture of the extent to which IEDs were deployed against security forces with precision as they were considered trophy targets. In this case, as per the quote, the ambush was laid, hoping to inflict harm on the Police on board. Unfortunately, children had also boarded the vehicle that was headed to Kiunga. The ride that was meant to reunite them with family for holidays turned tragic when the lorry was struck by an IED, claiming the lives of 4 children and injuring many more, including security forces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study elicit a few policy recommendations:

1. KDF should recognize conflict as a disaster and thus remodel Operation Amani Boni as per the priority areas of the Sendai Framework factoring in the wellbeing of children.
2. The CGL through the GoK should facilitate policy frameworks that would support an inter-county forum involving neighbouring counties that will work towards putting in place policies that support joint response mechanisms in times of disaster especially since Lamu County suffers spillover effects (displacement due to flooding and ethnic clashes in Tana River County as well as the mass migration of herders from Garissa County). Discussions should involve the provision costs of basic needs for displaced persons and the provision of veterinary services for animals to mitigate the spread of disease.
3. The County Assembly of Lamu should enact the Disaster Risk Management Bill to provide the required policy direction in disaster response in terms of setting up structures and allocation of finances to facilitate operations of the Directorate of Disaster Management.
4. National Government should come up with policies that are considerate of the need to increase disaster allocation for Lamu County because Lamu receives victims of the disaster from Tana River County and is the fall-back plan for herders in the neighbouring Garissa County, Treasury must consider engaging the County to deal with such cases of influx with the Equalization Fund being one option.
5. The Government of Kenya (GoK) through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries should work with the Counties of Lamu and Garissa to come up with mechanisms that register and control herd sizes as per available land sizes of pasture.

Practice recommendations

There is a need for KDF to develop a unit that mimics the UN and AU CIMIC to be embedded in their operations to provide relief and productive and structural services with a deliberate focus on DRR. Key to the Lamu situation with regard to food security would be the provision of agricultural extension, education and medical services.

2. The National Youth Service (NYS) through the Ministry of Public Service and Gender should provide training for the youth of Lamu County in order to capacity-build them in various skill sets as well as sharpen their work ethics. This will prepare them to take up the emerging job opportunities within Lamu County.
3. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Devolution should support and strengthen school feeding programmes in Lamu County in order to not only keep children in school but to avoid extreme cases of weakness and malnutrition.
4. KALRO-KCSAP should, in collaboration with KWS and non-governmental organizations such as Northern Rangeland Trust and World-Wide Fund for Nature should embark on a vigorous campaign of rangeland reseeding of over-grazed tracts of land through capacity building and equipping of locals in order to increase the supply of feed for livestock and wildlife alike. This will mean an expansion of KCSAP beyond the wards of Witu, Mkunumbi, Bahari, Hindi, Faza and Kiunga; and into Hongwe, Basuba, Shella and Mkomani.

5. NGOs such as World Concern which wound down operations in Lamu East due to high rates of insecurity should be encouraged to return and resume operations through building local capacities through ToT frameworks as is the modus operandi with other organizations such as NRT.
6. The CGL in collaboration with the KDF and KWS should support LAWASCO in their plans to situate water troughs at strategic locations and border points in order to provide water for wildlife and livestock from other counties with the aim of limiting contact with locals of Lamu thus avoiding conflicts; human-wildlife and herder-farmer.
7. There is a need for a more concerted multi-agency effort around settlements of herder-pastoralist conflict such as capacity-building headsmen with skills in mediation and conflict resolution in order to deal with increasing cases.
8. Lamu Business Community should start a CSR and mentorship programme targeting fishers in order to train them in the culture of savings an investment so that they can grow in terms of the scale of operations as well as have an assured source of finances to come in handy when seasons may not be ideal for fishing.

   There is need to carry out sensitization programmes among the Awer community on the need for attitudinal change that is pro-saving and pro-investment; an aspect that is in tandem with alternative livelihoods projects.

   There is a need to build the capacity of birth partners, and GoK to recognize them as midwives who in many cases in rural villages of the Boni are the only source of maternal health and especially delivery.

9. The GoK through the Ministry of Health should regularize the holding of medical camps across Lamu County, especially targeting the hard-to-reach areas. This should be done in collaboration with the security forces especially KDF who should provide air transport and security for drugs and personnel that are high-value targets. As part of their medical outreach programmes, nutritional supplements should be provided for children and mothers.
10. The Teacher's Service Commission (TSC) should deploy additional teaching staff to boost the quality of education accessed by learners, especially in the villages of Boni forest. This should take place after them capacity built with survival skills through courses such as Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT).
11. The CGL should mobilize resources (including donations) to set up a central printer facility to be used in the production of test papers that will assist teachers test learners in securitized areas. The KDF can facilitate their distribution through the provision of air or sea transport.
12. There is a need for a multi-agency approach to building local capacity to provide services in the areas of agricultural extension, healthcare and education. This will encourage the self-reliance of the locals in the provision of basic services.
13. The CGL should set up cooperatives and invest in refrigeration facilities for farmers in the dairy industry so that they can access the benefits of resource pooling in terms of training, access to far-flung markets that may offer competitive prices for milk, reduce post-harvest losses and out of the groupings, explore possibilities of pursuing joint investments.
14. KEBS should investigate the veterinary drugs market in Lamu and Garissa counties in a bid to crack down on counterfeit products in circulation that are ineffective against pests and diseases affecting livestock in those Counties.

CONCLUSION

The study speaks to the realities of conflict and how children find themselves as victims of such situations. Government responses in form of security operations should then remain cognizant of the presence of children as victims, irrespective of the prevailing circumstances. The adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction best guides the cushion of the host community including children. The priority areas of understanding disaster risk, disaster governance, disaster resilience and building back better. The policy and practice recommendations all speak to initiatives that directly impact children's well-being in Lamu. They speak to matters of education, nutrition, access to health, physical security and many other factors. A replication of the same in other conflict zones would equally address the plight of children in such environments.

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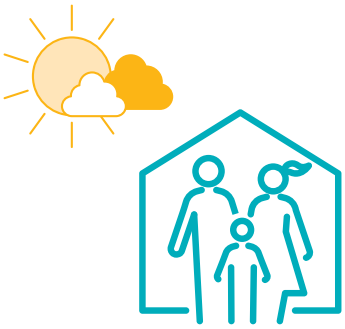
CHAPTER



CLIMATE CHANGE AND CHILD PROTECTION IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS. A CASE OF ASAL REGIONS IN KENYA

BY:

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ABSTRACT

Climate change and Conflicts are the two most devastating catastrophes affecting children in the Arid and Semi-Arid (ASAL) regions in Kenya. According to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, COCID-19 and climate change continue to impact the well-being of humanity and must be addressed through concerted efforts of all nations. Children have been at the centre stage of all these calamities and are often forgotten yet their protection is paramount. Children are the future generation and there is a need to protect the environment for the future of these generations. Conflicts in the ASAL compounded with climate variability have led to children's health and health being affected adversely. The long-term effects on child protection range from denied access to education, early marriage, gender-based violence, child labour, and access to basic needs which impact the health and overall well-being of children. Countries that are more vulnerable to climate change and conflicts hardly have adequate child protection policy measures, which puts children at risk of many forms of exploitation and abuse. Notwithstanding the increasing vulnerability of children during and after disasters and conflict is a cause to worry. There is currently an inadequate priority in terms of humanitarian action towards child protection and care and there is hardly any involvement of children in the journey to reduce the severe effects of climate change. This study sought to examine the effects of climate change and conflict as a threat to child protection in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) in Kenya and suggest possible solutions to enhance child protection. The findings were arrived at by way of a comprehensive literature review of the secondary sources. The study suggests policy recommendations required in this regard to reduce the effects of climate change on children.

INTRODUCTION

The effects of climate change on the child are significant and are likely to worsen over time. The double-edged threat of climate change and violent conflict continues to drain poor countries into conflict because it worsens their already dire situation. Violent conflicts render such countries less resilient and poorer, making them unable to withstand the impacts of climate change. Some developing countries are likely to experience extreme weather changes because they are situated in warmer regions compared to others. Their high dependence on agriculture puts their lives at risk as a result of floods and drought emanating from climate change (UNICEF, 2020).

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction established that about 87% of disasters were climate-related which contributed to over 700,000 deaths and affected 1.7 billion people with over 155 million displaced. This has contributed to USD 1.4 trillion in economic losses that resulted from climate change. Developing countries bear the burden of most of these disasters which worsen the livelihoods of people already in perilous conditions to become even more vulnerable. This impacts many aspects of children's lives and coping with the aftermath requires huge support. Furthermore, the World Health Organization estimates that 26% of the annual 6.6 million deaths of children below the age of five are linked to environment-related causes and pollution which affects their physical and cognitive development (Terres des Hommes, 2017).

THE VULNERABILITY OF PASTORALISTS...

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According to Kimaro et al. (2018), pastoralists perceive main climate changes as including more erratic and reduced amounts of rainfall, prolonged and frequent periods of drought and a rise in temperature. They attribute the major causes of climate change to population pressure and tree cutting. The vulnerability of pastoralists to the effects of climate change is highly differentiated across geography, income levels, and governance arrangements, amongst other things. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, pastoralists are already facing substantial challenges that include high poverty throughout the region and food insecurity except possibly in the South African rangelands. Few studies have explicitly investigated the impacts of climate change on poverty, nutrition, and health and the findings show that increased climate variability may increase severe child stunting by 55% in East and southern Africa and 62% in South Asia, and by 2050 (Herrero et al., 2016).

An interview with a 40-year-old woman from Bangladesh by the Human Rights Watch (HRW) reflects the intensity of bitterness as she recounts the experience. After their house was destroyed by river erosion resulting from floods and being vulnerable, a man threatened to burn the structure they had built if he was denied to marry her. Her husband eventually abandoned her and their three children to return to his first wife. As a single mother, she relied on agricultural work to feed her children and often lost the chance to work due to regular flooding in her area (McLeod, 2015). Despite tuition being waived for a primary school in Bangladesh, she was forced to take her two daughters out of school after class five and class three, as they could not afford to purchase school supplies and uniforms. She arranged marriages for both daughters when they reached age fifteen, saying she knew "the right age to get married is 18," but then she did not have enough money to feed them (McLeod, 2015).

UNICEF's report on climate change in Kenya that focuses on children gathered several responses concerning climate change effects. In an interview with a 14-year-old boy from Machakos county, the boy said that there is a high likelihood that they will live in a desert in the near future if they are not involved in the interventions undertaken. He cited increased cases of children dropping out of school to

engage in sand mining as a means of survival since the rivers had dried up and they lack food. Floods lead to the destruction of crops in the fields, and the loss of people's lives and livestock. Women and children suffer the most in flood situations. An extract from Save the Children (2021) reports how a 37-year-old woman from Wajir county describes how she lost her livestock to floods. According to the women, during periods of drought, they lost livestock which end up affecting their livelihood and only depend on one meal the day which is mainly cooked maize.

Save the Children in Kenya, documents the effects of Climate change on Children particularly those in the ASAL regions. Children are the most vulnerable under such conditions due to insufficient food and water, which increases the risk of malnutrition, leading to slow mental development and stunted growth. Children are more susceptible to various forms of natural disasters due to climate change. Their bodies adapt slowly to heat waves which affect them disproportionately and may suffer from heat cramps, heat rash, renal disease, exhaustion, respiratory illness, or death (Save the Children, 2021). Access to essential services is also hampered by natural disasters such as floods and heat waves. As such child protection systems may not be accessible because of the damage to facilities such as infrastructure thus making the emergency interventions to be less effective.

The United Nations mechanism for monitoring and reporting has been investigating the six grave violations against children and the report shows that West and Central Africa has been the region with the highest number of children recruited and used by armed forces and non-state armed groups globally. According to the report, West and Central Africa recorded more than 21,000 children verified by the United Nations (UN) as recruited and used by armed forces and non-state armed groups, and more than 2,200 children were victims of sexual violence in 2016. The report also shows that more than 3,500 children were abducted, with increased incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals recorded amounting to more than 1,500 (UNICEF for Every Child, 2021). The UNICEF publication and other child protection agencies reach out to governments and other partners to support and scale up documentation of the grave violations against children and devise strategies to prevent the violations of child rights.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, disasters threaten the three pillars of sustainable development including economic, social, and environmental more rapidly and unpredictably than expected. The agricultural sector bears the impact of disaster more with the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic which strains food supply chains across the world. Therefore, to enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (SFDRR), urgent efforts are essential to building disaster, disease, and climate-resilient agricultural systems. These will in turn improve the nutrition and food security of present and future generations amid climate change threats (FAO, 2021). Therefore, there is a need for policies to address the climate change issue that has put pressure on already scarce resources, worsened livelihoods, and threats child protection.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is based on a desk review of the secondary sources to meet the study objective through systematically reviewing documents. The main areas of focus were climate change and conflicts, child protection risks, effects of climate change with a focus on child labour, violence against children, child trafficking, and child marriages. The adaptations to climate change to enhance child protection were also examined through a review of secondary sources related to the topic. The search for secondary sources related to the area of study was guided by keywords such as climate change, conflict, child protection, and child rights. Language restriction was applied to ensure that the articles and other sources displayed appeared in English for easy comprehension by the author. Date restrictions were also placed to ensure that most of the articles for review are within five years of publication, hence applicable to the context of the discussion. Moreover, an article qualified for inclusion if it contains a link between climate change, conflict and child protection, the impacts of climate change on children, and the adaptations to climate change. The titles of the articles and their abstracts were then screened for relevance and if it meets the inclusion criteria, then they were deemed useful for the study.

DISCUSSIONS

Link Between Climate Change and Conflicts

Conflicts exist in many forms ranging from interpersonal violence, localized disputes, civil conflicts, ethnic cleansing, genocides, and neighbourhood conflicts. The link between conflict and climate change is among the grey areas of research that need more exploration. Few studies have looked into the relationship between the two and this study has attempted to establish this relationship. This chapter brings together ideas from different kinds of literature to facilitate a clear understanding of the link between climate change and conflict. Children are more vulnerable to the conflicts related to climate change which leads to harmful effects on their health, education, and psychosocial and physical well-being. Various scholars have explained the connection between climate change and conflict and various insights were gained from the literature.

A study conducted by ACERWC (2016) revealed that conflicts result in the use of a country's resources that would otherwise be invested to enhance national development. The statistics showed that Sudan spent $ 24 billion on containment of war in 2011 which was then equivalent to 162% of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Additionally, response plans for refugees in South Sudan undertaken by Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan in 2015 amounted to $ 810 million (ACERWC, 2016). Climate change may result in the deterioration of livelihoods and economic hardships pose risks of conflicts due to adverse climatic conditions such as floods and drought. During conflicts, loss of lives and livelihoods is witnessed, access to food and water is compromised, and damaging of essential services including health centres and schools. Long-term damage to the environment may also occur and severe destruction of infrastructures such as water sources, healthcare points, and sanitation occurs. Climate change amidst conflict creates new vulnerabilities for marginalized persons who possess limited awareness regarding the adaptations to climate change (ICRC, 2020, p. 16)

A study conducted by Bancroft (2018) revealed that climate change exacerbates conflict by disrupting social relationships which worsen due to inadequate coping mechanisms. Statistics drawn from a Stanford University study (2019) show that climate change

influences about 3% to 20% of armed conflicts and a dramatic rise in the percentage is expected to occur over time. Conflicts largely affect children, women, and vulnerable persons and as a result, children become victims of child trafficking mainly for sexual exploitation while others are married off at young age without their consent.

Most conflicts relating to climate change in East Africa revolve around pasture, natural resources, and water and commonly occur during drought situations (Barnfonden, 2021). There is a high likelihood of youth and children who live closer to armed conflict regions being exploited and recruited into militia groups when disaster strikes because the recruiters use food as an incentive to lure them. Some of the pastoral communities adopt survival mechanisms by joining armed groups to avoid such losses because they are provided with everything in those groups. However, this act puts their children at risk of exploitation by the terrorist militia in the form of child trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced marriage, child labour, induction of children into banditry, and sexual abuse. Moreover, pastoral communities migrate in search of water and pasture for their livestock during severe droughts. Conflicts may erupt along the border between the host community and the migrants as they compete for water and grazing land, here, children are mostly affected due to their vulnerability.

Climate Change, Conflicts, and Effect on Children

Climate change poses risks to children and families due to the pressure from the associated disasters. Extreme climatic changes and rising temperatures increase the frequency of droughts and floods. These contribute to economic hardships which heighten the incidences of child labour, lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation, early child marriages, and child trafficking. Children are hardly informed about the climate change effects and this exposes them to more harm due to their innocence (WHO, 2021).

Variations in climatic conditions confer costs to human generations. According to UNICEF (2017), climate change has significantly affected children's well-being in Kenya and more severe effects are expected if the issue of greenhouse gas emissions globally is not handled in time. Baringo county is among the counties that have been hard hit by climate change. The effects of the interchange between drought and floods put the inhabitants' lives at risk. Flash floods and droughts have claimed the lives of many vulnerable groups Children are more vulnerable to climate change effects compared to elder persons (Wasike, 2021).

According to the curator of Kenya Wild Service (KWS) Community Museum and Snake Park, there is increased human-wildlife conflict in the low-land areas of Baringo. This continues to shift the wildlife service's attention towards human attacks by wild animals such as crocodiles and snakes seeking refuge in higher grounds as a result of floods. Children are more susceptible to these attacks with a recent case being that of a 13-year-old girl who reported to have been attacked and killed by a crocodile: "The young girl was bathing in the lake when a crocodile emerged and dragged her deep into the lake, she is yet to be found", "said Janet Chebet, a villager from Kambi ya Samaki in Baringo county. Her remains have never been traced and this has left her family in anguish since no compensation has since been made. Besides, families living on the shores of the lake showed scars on their children's bodies and the elderly were inflicted by crocodiles, many people lost their limbs and were left paralyzed forever (Wasike, 2021).

> Nomadic livelihoods are also a source of conflict among communities which normally result from disputes over pastures. Climate change leads to prolonged drought and with these changing weather patterns, the pastoral communities are highly affected by the shortage of food and water for both people and livestock.

Link Between Climate Change Effects and Child Protection Issues

Understanding the severe effects of conflicts resulting from climate change on children facilitates effective mediation by the relevant authorities. Some of the effects of climate change and conflicts on children are discussed in detail as follows:

Child Labour

Child labour is more prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa compared to other parts of the world. According to the 2017 International Labour Office (ILO) report, out of the 153 million working children across the globe, the highest percentage was reported in sub-Saharan Africa. The number of children in employment increased by 8.4 million in 2021 as a result of COVID-19 impacts with the number of children between 5-11 years increasing significantly. Engagement in labour under severe climatic conditions imposes detrimental effects on the overall health and well-being of children. The hazardous forms of child labour are fuelled by climate change. A study by the United Nations Children's Rights Society showed that 27 million people have been killed globally and that human trade (trafficking) stands at 228 million and that more than 20 million children are living under harsh conditions after being sold for slavery (Maat for Peace, Development and Human rights, 2019).

Drought, heavy rain and other extreme weather conditions are destroying farmland in most countries of the world. According to Barnfonden (2021), by late 2019, approximately 6.7 million people in Ethiopia, 3.1 million in Kenya, 2.1 million in Somalia and 4.5 million in South Sudan suffered from severe food insecurity, and this figure is slightly lower than it was during the severe and prolonged drought in 2016- 2017. This forces families to migrate to safer places while others send their children to work in hazardous conditions to support the household in income generation (Terre Des Hommes International Federation, 2017). Although the intention is to contribute to the overall family income, in some cases these children work on family farms to relieve their parents of the task to search for income-generating activities elsewhere. Some of the environmental-related child labour include seasonal migration to evade stressful conditions at home such as lack of food in search for payable work in urban areas to meet basic needs. Aside from these, cases of child labour in the advent of drought keep increasing due to the high poverty levels in most African countries. This takes the form of fending for their families through the sale of firewood, engaging in farm activities at the expense of school going, and working for others to get food for the day.

The move towards renewable energy to revert the effects of climate change has also increased child labour in some African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to Barnfonden (2021), cobalt mineral is among the minerals required to undertake the renewable energy initiative and its mining has increased the number of children engaged in mining activities. Child labour in DR Congo has become the easiest way to mine more cobalt through extended working hours which exposes children to risks of extreme pollution with severe exploitation.

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Child Trafficking

A link between child trafficking and climate change exists as depicted by various scholars. Children are exposed to potential traffickers and physical violence as they move out of their homes in search of food and water during periods of extreme drought. The major victims of trafficking are women and girls with the main motive of sexual exploitation while others undergo forced labour. Boy child trafficking is majorly for hard forced labour such as construction and mining and sometimes sexual exploitation (World Vision, 2020). There are pieces of evidence of children's vulnerability to sexual abuse resulting from increased drought. A report published by Oxfam (2017) showed that Wajir and Turkana counties register high rates of sexual violence in form of rape and assault for women and girls while walking for long distances in search of firewood and water. In some cases, sex is used as a condition for women and girls to access water, and given that their rights to any decision-making are limited, they are often molested.

Conflicts and drought in the Horn of Africa and North-Eastern parts of Kenya are used as leeway for the smuggling of people with the promise of a better life in the urban areas including Nairobi and other regions. Mostly, children that fall prey are the

refugees, the homeless, and those from poverty-stricken areas and are sold into slavery as househelps, and workers in hotels and stores. In cases of natural disasters such as floods, most of the smugglers pose as people offering aid to the victims of floods which makes it easy for them to lure children and women into desperate situations due to the loss of their homes and property. They are promised job opportunities in far places and to win their trust, the traffickers may offer some cash to a girl's parents as an advance payment for the work she would be doing with the promise of sending more money soon. The girls hardly return home thereafter because they will be turned into sex slaves, engage in child labour and other forms of risky practices (International Organization for Migration, 2011).

Child Marriages

Communities affected by natural hazards such as floods and extreme weather conditions including drought resulting from climate change observe increased cases of child marriage. According to an article titled 'Girls Not Brides' (2021) that was assembled during the 2021 World Environmental Day, ending gender inequality by 2030 is curtailed by the increasing cases of child marriage which stands at 12 million per year globally. Despite 193 countries have subscribed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it may not be possible to achieve some of them without putting child marriage to an end. Girls are more vulnerable and are at risk of getting married out at young age compared to boys because households use it as a coping mechanism to reduce the number of dependents during drought and also use dowry payments to sustain them from the famine. As a result of these and other causes, approximately 70,000 adolescences die globally due to childbirth-related complications (Girls Not Brides, 2021).

Save the Children 2018 report shows that forced child marriages are perpetrated by inadequate job opportunities in the agricultural sector due to lack of rain. Some families force girls to get married to young boys to relieve them of the burden of feeding extra mouths while the role is shifted to the boy who assumes parenting responsibilities at a young age, mostly between 15-18 years. Most decisions around child marriage revolve around poverty which is then worsened by climate change. According to McLeod, Barr and Rall (2015), marrying off girls at a young age increases their risk of gender-based violence, rape, and physical abuse and this doubles the experiences of adult women. The struggles of children in marriage worsen with climate change due to the increased burden of walking long distances in search of food and water, susceptibility to diseases, and increased gender violence.

During drought, high rates of child marriage and early pregnancies are reported in the ASAL areas because some families consider marrying off girls as a coping mechanism as they receive dowry in exchange. An example is Tana River County whereby due to drought, one school reported 10 pregnant girls while another neighbouring school had 25 pregnant girls and of these, nearly half were awaiting marriage "At least 20 girls below 17 years were married off due to drought" (Adam, an elder in Tana Delta, 2021) (Oduor, 2021). Despite Kenya's move to end child marriage, the climate change issue puts the girl child at risk, especially in the North-Eastern parts of the country and Turkana (Wadeker, 2020). Having ratified the Convention on the Rights of a Child in 1990 under the United Nations' rights to protect children against abuse, the law prohibits child marriage below 18 years. The increasing drought frequency due to climate change results in the depletion of pasture and water causing the death of livestock and people among the pastoral communities.

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Child Education

Drought and famine have affected the schooling of children in sub-Saharan Africa. Guinea-Bissau had a 27.2% primary school completion rate in 2019 due to early drop-out rates mainly caused by early child marriages and child labour. Climate change sabotages children's education by interrupting their schooling as they concentrate on income-generating activities

and thus tend to prioritize employment instead of education. Some of the pastoralist communities tend to remove their school-going girls from school and marry them off in exchange for dowry in form of camels, clothes, and fresh milk. For example, most schools in Baringo south in Kenya remained closed for a better part of 2021 due to floods that led to classrooms being submerged in water. Young boys and girls were deprived of the learning opportunity despite their peers in other regions being in school and unfortunately, they are expected to compete with them in the Kenya national examinations. Some would be ferried to school using canoes due to the impassable roads that were destroyed by the floods.

Additionally, during droughts, children from those regions and other pastoral areas hardly go to school. They spend most of their time executing roles assigned to them by their parents such as heading livestock in far places, searching for water and firewood, and looking for wild fruits. The children are thus exposed to riskier situations which include among others attacks by wild animals such as hyenas and poisonous snakes. Migratory patterns of the pastoral communities in search of pasture and water for their livestock also disrupt the continuity of their children's education because they miss school for several months and thus lag behind the syllabus and are forced to repeat classes (Barnfonden, 2021).

Child Health

Food security is affected by factors including climate change, disasters, armed conflict and economic pressures. Climatic changes with extreme temperatures may lead to extreme events like drought and floods and thus crop failures and drying up of sources of water for irrigation. When grazing lands dry up and livestock starvation unfolds people experience increased levels of hunger and malnutrition (UNICEF & PLAN International, n.d.). Diarrhoea is a leading cause of death among children, and it increases with drought, flooding, and changing precipitation patterns which threaten safe water supplies and hygiene practices. It is anticipated that by 2030, climate-related diseases will lead to the death of an additional 48,000 children under the age of 15 (Child Rights Now, 2019). Drought is associated with food shortage, inadequate water, and respiratory illnesses resulting from a lot of dust and these largely impacts children. Severe food insecurity has a ripple effect on the health and nutrition status of children under 5 years and pregnant and lactating mothers. Limited access to and demand for health services, has resulted in high malnutrition and maternal mortality as well as the prevalence of other diseases. In addition, limited access to water and sanitation facilities and poor hygiene practices increases the risk of exposure to preventable diseases.

Some of the pastoralist communities tend to remove their school-going girls from school and marry them off in exchange for dowry in form of camels, clothes, and fresh milk. Most schools in Baringo south in Kenya remained closed for a better part of 2021 due to floods that led to the classrooms being submerged in water.

Food crops may be destroyed by floods while drought may lead to food shortage as a result of drying up of crops in the fields leading to starvation of children to death as was the case in Marsabit in March 2022 where 11 children below 5 years died of starvation (Akeyo, 2022). Inadequate access to nutritious food results in high malnutrition rates among young children leading to low immunity while dirty water and poor sanitation and hygiene practices increase the risk of exposure to waterborne diseases such as typhoid, cholera and diarrhoea. Psychological torture for children who have witnessed killings also affects their mental health considering that psychological counselling is hardly availed to the affected groups. According to UNICEF and PLAN International (n.d.), the estimated number of children that will be malnourished by 2050 as a result of climate change is 25 million. Inadequate food increases malnutrition which affects children's cognitive capacity in the long run. Floods also put children at high risk of severe diseases such as typhoid and cholera due to poor hygiene.

Save the Children (2021) report reflects on how a woman from Wajir county was left to fend for her family of eight and she laments the struggles she undergoes to get food. According to the report, the woman also takes care of her 2-year-old daughter

who had been diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition due to a lack of food rich in nutrients. The report observes that she also cited lack of food as a reason why her children dropped out of school to focus on domestic chores including the search for water and food in far places. The long distances travelled by women and girls in search of services, cultural barriers, conflict, and limited access to income increase their risk of experiencing sexual and gender-based violence. Research shows that 65% of women and girls have experienced physical and sexual violence in their lifetime and that there are also limited psychosocial, protection, and legal services for survivors. Therefore, the increasing effects of floods and drought on children's health raise concerns and call for relevant measures to curb the situation and protect the rights of children in the affected areas.

Induction of Children into Banditry

Sub-Saharan Africa specifically West and Central Africa have recorded more than 21,000 children verified by the United Nations (UN) as recruited and used by armed forces and non-state armed groups, and more than 2,200 children are victims of sexual violence. Boys are placed on the frontline during fight missions while girls are sunk into sexual slavery. Recruitment majorly takes the form of abduction and forced into the army while some voluntarily join the troop due to desperation with the hope of a better life following disasters. Participation of children in armed conflict subjects them to potential mental and physical injuries resulting in deaths (Santino *et al*, 2020). Increased drought heightens cattle rustling in arid areas including Turkana and Baringo. Additionally, the need to get more livestock herds to pay for dowry prompts the affected communities to engage in cattle rustling as a form of restocking livestock. Children are recruited into banditry at the young age of between 8-12 years and are trained to use guns *"it is unfortunate that children are used in cattle rustling instead of being in school"* (County Commissioner, Baringo, 2022)

Somalia and South Sudan register high cases of recruitment of children into armed conflicts in East Africa. Interviews with liberated children revealed that participation in armed conflicts, witnessing killings and rape, bombings, and beheadings of civilians among other forms of violence are traumatizing experiences that leave children with mental scars for a lifetime. According to Santino et al. (2020), in addition to the widespread poverty and famine, the conflict with al-Shabaab increased insecurity in Somali children's lives. In 2017, more than 700,000 children were internally displaced while 3.4 children were among the 6.2 million people that required humanitarian assistance.

Climate Change, Child Protection, and Child Rights

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction recognizes the importance of child protection, among its five key areas of priority, child protection tops the list. Climate change-related disasters expose children to risks and the severity outweighs the mitigation strategies. Moreover, the climate change consequences undermine child

protection. This calls for action from the child protection sectors to design strategies that are adapted to the changing environmental conditions to mitigate the effects of climate change on children. Girls are the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation and early marriages where some families use it as a coping mechanism to meet the needs of other family members, especially in drought situations. Additionally, during floods, people are taken to rescue centres such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) rescue centres where women and girls become prey to predators of sexual violence (IFCR, 2021). Children's rights must be upheld amidst the climate change crisis because their voice is instrumental in decision-making on issues directly affecting their well-being.

Ethiopian children between 8-12 years reported being vulnerable to harmful traditional practices which tend to increase with drought and thus a call for extra protection. Additionally, children of Kenyan origin cited adult abuse while at the rescue camps following disasters such as floods. According to Cianconi et al (2020), mental health outcomes of climate change range from minimal stress to clinical disorders such as anxiety and sleep disturbances, depression, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal thoughts. The consequences might affect individuals and communities in their everyday life and their livelihoods. This was the case in the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, and Liberia, where children suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. These scenarios and unmentioned cases justify the need for child protection as a priority to ensure continuity of life and education.

MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE RANGE FROM MINIMAL STRESS TO CLINICAL DISORDERS SUCH AS:

Anxiety
Sleep disturbances,
Depression,
Post-traumatic stress,
Suicidal thoughts.

(Cianconi et al, 2020)

The Child Protection Alliance Strategy 2021-2025 launched in 2021 covered a session on the climate crisis, climate justice, and child protection that emphasized increased understanding and prioritization of the impacts of the climate crisis on children. During the meeting, World Vision Kenya presented the increasing severing of floods and droughts due to the impacts of climate change which affects water and food availability. The presentation mentioned prolonged droughts as a contributor to the loss of household livelihoods which heightens violence against children as families resort to marrying off children to get means of survival. Children below eighteen years represent about 30% of the global population and are affected by climate change on yearly basis. Among the threats to future generations is climate change through its effects on child well-being, environment, and health outcomes (End Violence Against Children, 2022). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are entitled to nutritious and safe food, good health, and safety but these rights are infringed by climate change. Environmental degradation threatens children's health due to exposure to illnesses and inadequate food access. The effects of climate change put children in desperate situations including walking long distances in search of food and water leading to sexual violence and molestation by strangers.

Climate Change Adaptations and Measures to Enhance Child Protection

Addressing risks to child protection requires stringent solutions. Climate-sensitive livelihoods should be diversified to adapt to practices such as eco-tourism, beekeeping, and climate-smart agriculture. Replenishing the ecosystem ought to be prioritized by encouraging agroforestry to produce food for people and pasture for livestock and this will minimize pasture-related conflicts that children end up falling victims. Anticipatory action is another adaptation mechanism for crisis mitigation through keen observation of the early warning signs although it is not child-sensitive. Migrant children face various risks due to their vulnerability and therefore need adequate protection. The expansion of child protection programs is key towards ensuring child safety. Child protection centres have been instituted by UNICEF where they are provided with basic needs and other essential services such as education and health care, hence realizing their basic right.

Meaningful child participation is also crucial for addressing child protection risks because it is a cross-cutting adaptation component for anticipatory action. Children have the right to involvement in climate change issues since it affects them and so their involvement in decision-making. In this regard, children should be viewed as potential protagonists to speed up adaptations to climate change and not passive victims. Some of the practical approaches that enhance meaningful participation of children include children's climate cards for use in the call for climate action at their homes, a child-centred assessment tool kit which is an interactive curriculum that supports climate adaptation through youth-led action (UNICEF & PLAN International, n.d.)

Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA) and Payments for ecosystem services (PES) offer potential climate change and livelihood diversification adaptation options. Ecosystem-based adaptations include rehabilitating watersheds, conserving agriculture and promoting agroforestry, and creating new markets for income generation and livelihood diversification. However, although Payment for ecosystem services is attractive in terms of conserving the environment and contributing to poverty reduction, PES schemes may increase pressures on scarce land and water, limit people's rights to land access weaken culture hence leading to high transaction costs (Herrero, 2016).

Children from less developed countries interact more with the physical environment compared to their counterparts in developed nations and this includes playing by the river bed, fetching water and firewood, and taking care of livestock in isolated bushes among others. This makes it easy for them to be incorporated as agents of change because they can easily identify environmental problems and suggest possible solutions. Children can be adapted by raising awareness of the risk factors associated with climate change and strengthening their capacity for developing relevant skills to protect their livelihoods and environment.

Participatory approaches such as engaging children in research and data collection regarding sanitation standards around their schools and homes help in reducing water-related illnesses (UNICEF for Every Child, 2021). Considering the rising sea waters in the coastal regions which contaminate drinking water due to increased flooding, UNICEF supports programs tasked with harvesting and treatment of drinking water in flood-stricken areas. It also includes constructing water tanks for the communities to harvest clean water. Contaminated water increases the risks of contracting waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, and typhoid. Therefore, as a way of protecting children from these effects, humanitarian organizations should uphold proper sanitation through the construction of toilets initiatives to minimize the disposal of faeces in bushes and minimize the spread of communicable diseases.

Children as Agents of change to Climate Change Challenges

A survey conducted by Patricio Cuevas-Parra on behalf of World Vision International revealed that children view themselves as agents of change on the climate issues affecting them and not victims of the same. According to the published survey, children indicated that they would rather be active creators and implementers of climate change policies other than passive subjects of the same. problems, but instead want to be active creators and implementers of solutions (World Vision 2020, p. 17). Children understand the problems facing them more than their parents do and are hence capable of coming up with workable ideas for the daily climate-related issues affecting them. However, these children lack the platform and support needed and the opportunity to engage with relevant stakeholders to provide solutions. This is yet to be realized due to the lack of recognition of children as agents of change in climate action and not victims. Nonetheless, this can be made possible if trust is bestowed on children as agents of

> Save the Children 2018 report shows that forced child marriages are perpetrated by inadequate job opportunities in the agricultural sector due to lack of rain. Some families force girls to get married to young boys to relieve them of the burden of feeding extra mouth while the role is shifted to the boy who assumes parenting responsibilities at a young age, mostly between 15-18 years.

transformative action to bring the required change in society.

Some of the suggested approaches to ensure children's involvement as agents of change in tackling the climate effects on children include: Creation of avenues to provide a platform for children to become effective agents of change is crucial for the dissemination of knowledge and incorporating children's views when designing policies adapted for climate change. Children can be engaged in focus group discussions, community mapping, and disaster preparedness exercises for the realization of the results. Children should be at the forefront in dealing with conflicts related to climate change by creating community awareness to reduce the climate change impacts on people's lives. There is hardly any involvement of children in the journey to reduce the severe effects of climate change. According to the IFRC's child protection advisor Gurvinder Singh, despite children having innovative leadership skills, their opinion is hardly considered in crises. Making a reasonable effort to listen to children, supporting their ideas, and taking action to ensure that their feedback is incorporated within the policy frameworks. There is a need to believe in the children's ability to provide solutions to problems that have long been considered as requiring scholarly minds. The need to reach out to the most vulnerable categories of children is crucial and by listening to their views on measures to reduce climate effects, a unique solution may be obtained (World Vision International, 2020).

Christian, a 17–year old from the Democratic Republic of Congo, responded to an interview on the solutions to climate change by saying "Young people and children in the matter of climate change can sensitize our communities on reforestation and better garbage management in each region. We need to be the reference for adults and children, and promote the reduction of greenhouse gases". During the same survey, Mary, also 17 years of age from Kenya had this to say "We should act as role models to prevent people from cutting down trees and explain to them the benefits of having trees in the area" (World Vision International, 2020).

In Baringo County, some children have engaged in the practice of planting trees to avert the drought effects resulting from climate change. Stela is an environmental conservationist in her school driven by her love for the environment and knowledge gained from the environmental conservation club on the benefits of trees. According to Stela, her community has been struggling with the effects of intense heat resulting from prolonged droughts and this bothered her so much. Cases of children and parents dying were being reported because of a lack of food and water. At a tender age, the girl together with other pupils in the environmental conservation club with the help of their patron carried out a massive tree-planting exercise to protect their environment (Ooko, 2021). They adopted a low-cost tree growth approach with the support of World Vision and this also promoted the growth of indigenous trees. Stela reported that the outcome of tree planting was cool temperatures within the school compound which improved pupils' level of concentration in class and provided good sheds during breaks. With the increased tree covering on the initially bare land, the nearby streams filled up and water kept flowing even in dry seasons unlike before. The rapid growth of grass was witnessed and the school began keeping livestock for meat and milk to feed the children and generate income. They also grew crops such as maize and beans through irrigation and this solved the food insecurity problem in the school. More children were encouraged to go to school because they get food and water which relieves them from the strenuous domestic chores at home and this reduced school absenteeism cases (Ooko, 2021).

> Some of the pastoralist communities tend to remove their school-going girls from school and marry them off in exchange for dowry in form of camels, clothes, and fresh milk. Most schools in Baringo south in Kenya remained closed for a better part of 2021 due to floods that led to the classrooms being submerged in water.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The effects of climate change on the global population including children tend to become severe with an increase in global greenhouse gas emissions. The study recommends a reduction in these gases by 2030 to reduce the effects to close to zero by 2050. However, less effort has been put by countries globally to reduce these effects. As highlighted by other scholars, a huge knowledge gap and literature on the link between climate change impact and child violence exists. There is a need for more policy formulations to address the climate change effects. Children ought to be incorporated in policy making because they are directly affected by climate change. Embracing green education as a channel of creating awareness among children on environmental issues also helps in reducing the climate change effects. It allows children to engage in climate change discussions especially girls and the underrepresented vulnerable groups. Children's resilience to climate change should also be analysed and the findings incorporated in national policies to enable the current and future generations to tackle the challenges of climate change.

Prevention and responding to violent conflicts call for a safe environment to protect children's well-being. Provision of essential services including health care and education in the affected areas should be among the recovery strategies to reintegrate children back to their livelihoods. There is need to establish an efficient child protection system but this requires countries to first ratify the main regional and international instruments of child rights protection. Sexual violence against children and gender-based violence under conflict situations can be minimized by prosecuting the offenders. In this regard, governments ought to uphold child dignity and be committed to end impunity. Creating awareness among the community members enables children to know the avenues to report any forms of abuse.

Conflicts as a result of climate change may lead to child separation from family members which puts them at the risk of recruitment into banditry groups as child soldiers for the boys while the girls are mostly for sexual exploitations. The study recommends that countries should employ necessary measures to reunite children with their families to save them from all forms of exploitation. Additionally, rescue centres should be established in areas that are prone to conflicts to provide shelter to children and other affected persons as they await further assistance. Furthermore, the child protection systems and mechanisms ought to be strengthened including juvenile justice system to convict the perpetrators of child trafficking.

Formulation of relevant strategies to respond to violence against children resulting from climate change is essential to address issues such as sexual abuse, forced marriages, child trafficking, and child labour. There is a need for a better understanding of the climate change-related risks and availing relevant tools for easy access to climate change data to reduce its future impacts on livelihoods. Humanitarian organizations ought to take up the task of protecting children against the risks of climate change. Donors should provide funding to developing countries that are prone to severe effects of climate change to protect the rights of children and enable access to good food and clean water and a chance to continue with their education.

Based on the situation in the arid and semi-arid parts of Kenya, the study recommends that counties and national government ought to activate their disaster management mechanisms to respond to community needs. The government should engage the humanitarian partners

as reinforcements to their effort and set aside funds to support the affected families and mitigate the situation to minimize these effects on children. Increasing financial allocation for disaster management will empower the hard-hit communities to prepare for the crises such as drought and floods.

Lastly, there is a need to strengthen the Drought Risk Management (DRM) platforms in Kenya because the National Drought Management Authority is more focused on a reactive approach rather than an proactive approach to disasters. Detailed understanding of the policies and operational realities facilitates recognition of the early warning system and thus prevention of the climate change effects.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that children undergo traumatizing experiences as a result of climate change and conflicts. Their livelihoods are shattered, and some undergo sexual abuse and physical torture which leaves them with emotional and physical scars that they would deal with in their entire lives. Child marriages cut short the dreams of most girls because they no longer go to school and hence cannot pursue their dream careers. Child labour deprives children of their dignity and child rights yet the child protection mechanisms are inefficient in responding to child protection issues. Conflicts were found to disrupt livelihoods, and children get separated from their parents hence making it easy for them to fall victim to child trafficking and enrolment into violent groups and their rights are violated.

Droughts and floods resulting from climate change also contribute to child vulnerabilities through channels such as child labour, sexual exploitation, deteriorating health and education, malnutrition and early child marriages. The study proposed several adaptation mechanisms to minimize the effects of climate change and conflict on children. Children were also found to be effective agents of change because as they interact with the environment, they understand the environmental problems within the community and their possible solutions. The study recommends various measures that countries can adopt to handle the effects of climate change and conflict on children and is also a champion for the protection of child rights

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6
CHAPTER

EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK IN MALI, NIGER AND BURKINA FASO: HOW SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT AND HOW THIS HAS AFFECTED CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING CYCLE

BY:

NKIMBA KATO, NJOROGE ANTHONY, OTIENO FIONA, NJOROGE MARYLINE AND CHEGE ALEXANDRA

ABSTRACT

Conflicts in the Sahel region have had a negative impact on the unarmed civilian population in the Region, including, the ability of students to access safe schools and safe education. There is a need to fully appreciate the underlying root causes of the multi- layered issues that give rise to such tensions. This study involved a desk review that aimed to inform child-led participatory studies with a focus on education under attack and its effect on schooling in the Sahel region, specifically in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This review demonstrated an escalation of armed conflict and violence in the Central Sahelian countries and a deteriorating humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central Sahelian countries experience most, if not all, of the six categories of attacks on education. International and continental commitments and efforts aimed at preventing and responding to attacks on education and their effects exist at various levels; however, more still needs to be done by all parties to fully implement the Safe Schools Declaration and other international obligations the Central Sahelian in order to guarantee children in situations of armed conflict and violence access to a safe and quality education.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Sahel Region as the "Land of Opportunities," and rightly so, because of its rich cultural heritage and abundant human and natural resources (Africa Renewal, 2021). Properly harnessed and applied to areas of strategic importance, this enormous potential can spur the growth the Region so badly needs to address its current political and socio- economic demands. Despite this, Sahel is faced with immense challenges — both natural and manmade. Among these are the political, social and economic fault lines that often spiral into undesirable tensions — and ultimately, destructive and violent conflicts.

These conflicts have had negative impacts on the unarmed civilian population in the Region, including among other things, the ability of students to access safe schools and safe education. There is a need to fully appreciate the underlying root causes of the multi- layered issues that give rise to such tensions. Unmet political and socio-economic demands have continued to "reinforce people's sense of frustration, discrimination, injustice and inequality…" (Danish Refugee Council, 2020). Other causes are related to state fragilities, unaddressed past grievances, cultural and religious issues, rampant corruption, widespread poverty amidst limited livelihood opportunities, rising inequalities and unemployment, exclusion and intercommunal tensions, among others. Understanding the root causes is critical for building lasting and durable solutions to end the cycle of conflicts and violence bedevilling the Region (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2020).

The Sahel Region, especially Central Sahel, has been experiencing prolonged periods of insecurity, massive population displacements, rights abuses and violence largely due to armed conflict. Notably, Liptako Gourma region — which borders Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger — has suffered from a myriad of issues, including armed violence driven among others by organized crime and non-state armed groups. As a result, this border region has continually seen massive loss of lives (approximately, 5,000 deaths as of August 2020) and displacement of people (approximately, 1,754,223 people as of March 2021). In addition to loss of loved ones, displaced populations have been deprived of their dignity, property and means of livelihood — further affecting their psychosocial wellbeing. In all this, children inevitably bear the biggest brunt of "adult wars." With 64.5% of the population well below 25 years of age, the socio-political situation has an adverse effect in particular on the education and the future of this very youthful population. The effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic across Central Sahel have further exacerbated an aready very precarious situation.

Map showing the Central Sahelian Countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger — ©Nations Online Project, Used for educational purpose (fair use), Source: www.nationsonline.org

Governments worldwide imposed restrictions on movement and gathering of persons as a mitigation intended to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In Central Sahel, this has led to school closures. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in gender-based violence with school children and youth spending more time at home and in communities — especially, against girls and women (UN Office for the Coordiantion of Humanitarian Affairs, 2021). Cases include domestic violence and assault against girls and women as well as early child marriages and pregnancies.

The scope of this review will limit itself to education under attack in Central Sahel, specifically in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Operational Definition of "Attacks on Education"

Attacks on education are defined "as any threatened or actual use of force against students, teachers, academics, education support and transport staff (e.g., janitors, bus drivers), or education officials, as well as attacks on education buildings, resources, materials, or facilities (including school buses). These actions may occur for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, or religious reasons. Attacks on education not only kill, maim, and traumatize students and personnel but also disrupt students' right to education. They impede the ability of instructors and educational institutions to offer inclusive, quality education, and they restrict students' access to schools and universities…" (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). Attacks on education can fall under the following six categories (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018):

- Physical attacks or threats of attacks on schools;
- Physical attacks or threats directed at students, teachers, and other education personnel;
- Military use of schools and universities;
- Child recruitment at, or en route to or from, school or university;
- Sexual violence by armed parties at, or en route to or from, school or university; and
- Attacks on higher education.

The six categories of attacks on education mentioned above are in many cases associated with the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict identified and condemned under the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 1261 of 1999.

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Resolution 1261 condemns the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict and calls on all parties concerned to put an end to the following six grave violations:

- Killing and maiming of children;
- Recruitment or use of children as soldiers
- Sexual violence against children;
- Abduction of children;
- Attacks against schools or hospitals; and
- Denial of humanitarian access for children.

Although issues of concern to "education under attack" can be located in the six grave violations mentioned above, worth noting is the violation that highlights "attacks against schools…" This recognizes the direct and indirect impact of conflict on schools, schooling, students, teachers and other education personnel. It notes that although schools should be zones of peace where children are granted protection even in times of conflict, there is an increasing trend of schools being attacked and/or used for military purposes. This results in physical damage to schools; forced closure or disrupted functioning of schools; as well as physical attacks or threats directed at students; their teachers; or other education personnel. The general insecurity created by conflict may prevent children and teachers from accessing / attending school. Parents may also find it too dangerous to send their children to school. Furthermore, the indirect impact of conflict may include obstructing access to schools particularly where armed groups are opposed to secular or girls' education (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019). This understanding of "attacks on education" informs this desk review and the subsequent child-led participatory field research.

PROTECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

A number of international and continental commitments to protect education from attack are aligned to international, continental and regional pledges to protect the right of children to education in situations of armed conflict.

At Global Level

Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states unequivocally that "children and young people have the right to education no matter who they are, regardless of their race, gender or disability, if they're in detention, or if they're a refugee" (UNCRC Simplified Articles, 2021) or internally displaced, due to circumstances — such as, natural disasters and armed conflict. The Convention in this regard grants children unfettered access to their right to education regardless of the situation or circumstances they find themselves in, and implores, under Sub-section 1, that: "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, […] with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity."

In the Sahel Region where the majority population is under 25 years of age, disruption of children's education due to armed conflict in essence makes children — "forced" out of school prematurely — susceptible to recruitment into armed groups or forces or other illicit activities, such as, drug or human trafficking or kidnapping for ransom, sexual exploitation and slavery, among others. This is presently the case in a number of areas affected by armed conflict in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Education, school personnel and students as well as the school infrastructure in Central Sahel have been deliberately attacked by armed extremist groups. Schools have also been used by armed forces for military purposes (Bailie, 2020). Attacks and/or occupation of schools have been an obstacle to children's right to education.

The first Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict compels state parties to put in place measures outlawing recruitment and use of children under 18 years of age in hostilities as well as ensuring that those already conscripted are demobilized, (United Nations, 2021), Burkina Faso and Mali have signed and ratified the first Optional Protocol, while Niger has accepted to be party to it. In principle, the three member states oblige to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and the purpose of the Protocol (United Nations, 2021). There is still great concern that parties to the conflict in the Region continue to commit violations and abuses against children —

such as, "recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction…" and outright violation of children's access and right to education (United Nations, 2018).

Where opportunities for learning exist even in conflict situations, such safeguards (e.g., the Optional Protocol afore-mentioned) give the under 18-year-olds (who have dropped out of school due to conflict or other reason) another chance to re-join and complete school for a better future, rather than — for lack of other viable options — (be forced to) join armed forces or groups to earn a living.

Without access to education in dire times, children are always at greater risk of losing their future. Education — together with other critical services provided around its provision, such as, psychosocial and other support — remains an important safety net to protect children from falling through the cracks during times of conflict or disasters, when family and/or community structures people depended on for livelihood and/or other support have fallen apart or are virtually non-existent. As unambiguously put in the Safe Schools Declaration:

> *"…Education can help protect children and youth from death, injury and exploitation; it can alleviate the psychological impact of armed conflict by offering routine and stability and can provide links to other vital services."*

The second Optional Protocol to the CRC on the other hand commits state parties to put in place measures or legislations to expressly prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child phonography — "whether such offences are committed domestically or transnationally or on an individual or organized basis…" (General Assembly of the United Nations, 2000). In the countries under review (Danish Refugee Council, 2020), literature is rife with anecdotal evidence of rape, trafficking of children for purposes of sexual exploitation and slavery committed in situations of armed conflict or violence. The Public Statement released by the Chair of the UN Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict on 5th February 2021 confirms and condemns these violations and abuse by all parties to the conflict (United Nations, 2018). Though prone to attacks during armed conflicts or violence, schools are still regarded as safe spaces where children can be "protected from the physical dangers around them — such as, abuse and exploitation and recruitment from armed groups…" (UNICEF, 2021).

To contribute to a comprehensive framework intended to address the protection of children affected by armed conflict (including their right to education and health), Article 11 of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1998 adopted in 2011 in particular calls upon:

> *"members states to take decisive and immediate action against persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed in situations of armed conflict [and] bring to justice those responsible for such violations […] including […] recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other sexual violence, attacks on schools and/or hospitals, attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals through national justice systems, and where applicable, international justice mechanisms and mixed criminal courts and tribunals, with a view to ending impunity for those crimes committed against children."*

Another UNSC Resolution 2143 adopted three years later in 2014 reiterates its deep concerns about continued attacks and threats of attacks against schools and/or hospitals and their protected persons in situations of conflict and "urges all parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children's access to school and/or hospitals…" (United Nations Security Council, 2014).

Resolution 2143 further encourages members states to "deter use of schools by armed forces and non-state groups…and to ensure that attacks on schools…are investigated and those responsible duly prosecuted…" (United Nations Security Council, 2014).

To make these frameworks hinging on children's right to education a reality in contexts of armed

conflict, The Safe Schools Declaration (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015) has been in place since 2015. A robust community of 109 states had signed the Declaration as of June 2021 — including, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015). The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political agreement designed to "strengthen the protection of education from attack and restrict use of schools and universities for military purposes. It seeks to ensure the continuity of safe education during armed conflict." (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015). The African Union, through its Peace and Security Council, also exhibited its support for the Safe Schools Declaration and guidelines and encouraged its member states to endorse and implement it…" (Africa Union Peace and Security Council, 2016).

As signatories to the Declaration, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger commit to treating schools as purely civilian entities and essentially out of bounds to all forms of military activities and use — even, in times of conflict. At the very minimum, Safe Schools Declaration (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015) envisions schools and universities as spaces where:

- Students pursue their right to education, without fear of attack or violence against them;
- Teaching professionals and non-teaching staff are able to work without fear of attack or reprisal for doing their work;
- Students feel safe to learn, even during times of conflict.

To this effect, six-step "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict" are already in place; and serve as a useful guide to responsible practice in situations of armed conflict (Protecting Education, 2021).

Signatory states also agree to share promising practices on how best to protect education facilities, personnel and learners during armed conflict. They also commit "to collect, or facilitate the collection of data on attacks on education, investigate and prosecute war crimes involving education, and provide assistance to victims…" (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015). At the heart of this is the commitment by all parties to provide children of all age's equal opportunity and access to an education that is conflict sensitive, safe and inclusive — regardless of one's ability, background, clan, ethnicity, gender, race or religion.

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At Africa Continent Level

At continental level, the African Union (AU) of which Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are member states, has had several commendable efforts contributing to mitigating and addressing attacks on education. Under Article 22 of the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) State Parties:

> *"(1) […] shall undertake to respect and ensure respect for the rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts which affect the child; (2) […] shall take all the necessary measures to ensure that no child will take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child;(3)[…] protect the civilian population in armed conflicts and shall take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflicts. Such rules shall also apply to children in situations of internal conflicts, tensions and strife."*

Also relevant is Article 11 which recognizes the rights of every child to education and commits States Parties to take all appropriate measures with the view of achieving the full realization of this right. The above articles, and others such as Article 16, 27 and 29, reinforce each other in providing protective measures to address issues of concern to "Education Under Attack."

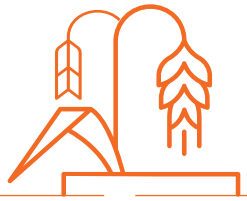
In addition, the AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) (Africa Union, 2017) recognizes the threat presented by attacks on schools as well as military use of schools and

universities to education (Africa Union, 2017). According to CESA 16-25, conflict negatively affects school enrolment and completion, aggravates issues affecting education of girls and generally worsens students' learning outcomes. To address challenges presented by armed conflict, the strategy aims to "Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups." This it proposes to achieve through a wide range of strategies such as formulation of relevant policies, building capacity of security forces, teachers and other key people as peace actors and mediators, developing and disseminating peace education teaching and learning materials and facilitating learning exchanges across Africa (Africa Union, 2017). Also worth noting from the AU are calls by the AU Peace and Security Council on Member States to: comply with international humanitarian law and to ensure that schools are not attacked and used for military purposes (615th Meeting, 2016); endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration for its potential to contribute to keeping girls in schools as an effective strategy to end child marriage (692nd Meeting, 2017); and implement, among other initiatives, interventions aimed at reversing the increasing trend of high numbers of out-of-school children, particularly in countries experiencing armed conflict in Africa — in line with the Safe Schools Declaration and Guidelines (706th Meeting, 2017) (Africa Union, 2017).

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION: CENTRAL SAHEL AND SITUATION BY COUNTRY

Regional Outlook

Despite commitments to protect education from attack, armed groups have time and again continued to launch sporadic attacks on schools in Central Sahel. Liptako Gourma, a porous tri-border region shared by the Central Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, is the epicentre of armed conflict and violence driven by organized crime and non-state armed groups (Dufka, 2021). These groups have been blamed for much of the mayhem committed against Central Sahelians. At the roots of the violent conflict and insecurity that have ravaged Liptako Gourma are a myriad of political and socio-economic issues — among them, climate unpredictability, high levels of poverty and unemployment, competition for limited resources (e.g., water, land, etc.) and communal tensions. Faced with a weak presence of state institutions and porous borders, it is not hard to see why there are non-state armed groups incursions from across the border operating with blatant impunity.



AT THE ROOTS OF THE VIOLENT CONFLICT AND INSECURITY, **that have ravaged Liptako Gourma are a myriad of political and socio-economic issues — among them, climate unpredictability, high levels of poverty and unemployment, competition for limited resources (e.g., water, land, etc.) and communal tensions.**

Between mid-2017 and mid-2019, there was a six-fold increase in school closures in the central Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger due to attacks and insecurity (Dufka, 2021). During the same period, the UN reported that these same school closures totalled to over 3,300 schools across Central Sahel and affected over 16,000 teachers and nearly 650,000 children…" (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020).

For instance, just between January and July 2020, over 85 attacks were made on education in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. It is important to note here that the attacks between late March and May 2020 happened when schools had closed due to COVID-19 health measures (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020). Even amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges highlighted in this report, some progress — although hardly enough compared to the enormous need — is being made towards ensuring children's right to education, e.g., distance learning via radio during COVID-19 school closures.

As mentioned earlier, here has been concern that the COVID-19 pandemic was worsening an already dire situation of conflict in Sahelian countries. This

was reiterated by the Special Representative for West Africa during his briefing to the UN Security Council that the pandemic "is likely to exacerbate existing conflict drivers with implications for peace and stability in the region…" (UN Office for Wesr Africa and the Sahel, 2020). Children not in school for example — due to COVID-19 related closures/ restrictions — are always at risk of recruitment or engaging in other risky behaviour harmful to their own lives and /or communities where they live.

Across the region, girls, women, boys and men experience attacks on education and their impacts differently. For instance, due to prevalent gender and social norms that present hinderances to girls' education and women's work outside the home, girls and women are often deliberately targeted during attacks on education. According to a 10th September 2020 UNSC report on children and armed that included discussions on attacks on education, including in the Sahel:

- girls are much less likely to return to school after school closures or destruction of school infrastructure; and
- girls are more likely to experience sexual and gender-based violence on their way to and from school (United Nations Security Council, 2020).

This calls for gender-sensitive prevention and response to attacks on education. However, interventions often fall short due to limited or lack of gender-disaggregated data (United Nations Security Council, 2020). There are however worrying trends showing a growing escalation in armed conflict and violence that (threaten to) roll back gains painstakingly made since the G5 Sahel Force was established in 2017 "to respond to the expansion of armed and violent extremist groups and to the deteriorating security situation in the region." (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2021). The current situation in areas affected by conflict attests to this, (Field Note 2, 2021) and is aptly captured in a joint statement made on the eve of the ministerial meeting on the Sahel on June 11, 2021, in Dakar, Senegal as follows:

> *Attacks against civilians are increasing, including in areas hosting internally displaced persons and refugees in Mentao and Dori in Burkina Faso, Intikane, Tahoua, Tillabéri in Niger and in northern Mali. Insecurity and attacks are hampering access to basic social services, including health centres and schools, and to necessities such as water and food (United Nations, 2020).*

The withdrawal of government personnel due to insecurity has created a gap in the provision of critical services. This has left the civilian population — in areas of Central and Eastern Mali, Northern Burkina Faso and Western Niger affected by armed conflict — defenceless and without adequate state protection nor access to crucial services, such as, education and healthcare (United Nations, 2020).

The following country analysis of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger shades lighter on the nature and extent of attacks on education in these countries and efforts being undertaken to ensure that children continue to access education even amidst the ongoing conflict situation.

The Situation in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country of approximately 20 million people and is divided into 13 administrative regions, 45 provinces and subdivided into 351 communes. Once regarded as a relatively more peaceful country in the Region, Burkina Faso had by 2020 plummeted into a nation marred by an unending cycle of conflict and violence — especially, in six of its regions (UN Office for the Coordination of the Humanitarian Affairs, 2020). By November, 2020, the country had registered 1.05 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) due to safety and security concerns (UN Office for the Coordination of the Humanitarian Affairs, 2020). In less than six months, another 71,000 persons in the North and East regions were displaced because of clashes between armed groups and security forces as well as attacks

Due to prevalent gender and social norms that present hinderances to girls' education and women's work outside the home, girls and women are often deliberately targeted during attacks on education.

on unarmed civilians and loss of property (UN Office for the Coordination of the Humanitarian Affairs, 2020). By all accounts, Burkina Faso has one of the fastest growing numbers of IDPs worldwide.

Like its other Central Sahelian neighbours of Mali and Niger, Burkina Faso has increasingly come under attack from armed Islamist groups whose latest spate of massacres has intensified. An estimated 500 Burkinabe have been killed since early 2021, allegedly by Islamist armed groups — with the latest figures of fatalities committed on 5th June, 2021 just outside Solhan village in Burkina Faso's north-eastern Yagha province numbering 140 people including 8 children (Dufka, 2021). As of 2016, Burkina Faso saw an emergence of its homegrown Burkinabè armed Islamist militant groups — notably, the Ansaroul Islam (Dufka, 2021). Between 2016 and 2018, Ansaroul Islam was blamed for more than 50 percent of all acts of armed violence against the civilian population that "forced more than 100,000 to flee their homes and 352 schools to close…" (Le Roux, 2019).

In 2019, there was an increase in the wave of attacks against the civilian population that spilled over into 2020. To respond to this wave of armed violence, counter-offensive strategies involving security forces and self-defence militias worsened further an already volatile situation — driving scores of people away from their homes in search of safety. Over 830,000 people were forced to leave their homes (Human Rights Watch, 2020). However, this wave of violence had other militant Islamist groups as active players (Le Roux, 2019). In 2020, 171 cases of grave violations against children were documented. These violations occurred mostly in the affected regions of East, Central North, and Sahel. Four boys were recruitment in the Sahel region (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2021). At least, 54 children (27 boys, 26 girls, 1 sex unknown) were killed or maimed, and the 22 children (14 boys, 8 girls) were abducted. Three cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children were reported (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2021).

It should be noted here that the Government of Burkina Faso developed a handover protocol together with the UN Country Task Force for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors. By the time of compiling this report, the Handover was yet to be adopted (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2021).

Education under Attack in Burkina Faso

There have been reports of attacks on education by Islamist armed groups operating in six out of the 13 regions since 2017. The Islamists' armed groups are opposed to the Western-style education and government institutions. According to Human Rights Watch, "There were 126 attacks and armed threats against education professionals, students, and schools. More than 50 percent of these were said to have occurred in 2019. At least 12 education professionals were killed and 17 assaulted or abducted in the attacks, with many others forcibly detained and threatened…" (Le Roux, 2019).

> Many parts of the north and the central region have ever since become a theatre for armed violence, including security incidents (e.g., jihadist attacks) and intercommunal conflicts (e.g., between farmers and pastoralists) as well as ethnic violence — all with disastrous outcomes such as, massacres and destruction of property.

By the end of March 2020, schools everywhere had temporarily closed in observance of Government's COVID-19 health-related measures to curb the spread of the virus. Before that, 2512 schools in 6 regions of Burkina Faso closed due to attacks or insecurity — affecting some 350,000 children and 11,200 teachers (Human Rights Watch, 2020). There were 947 documented attacks on teachers, students and schools in Sahel, 366 in Centre-Nord, 556 in Est, 357 in Nord and 239 in Bouche Du Mouhon (Human Rights Watch, 2021). By October 2020, 2398 schools remained closed— a very slight fall by 4.5%. From 2015 – 2019, there were reports of military use of schools, including universities in Burkina Faso; and the country was named as one of those where "reports documented 20 – 499 students, teachers, or other education personnel harmed by individually targeted attacks…" (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019).

The situation is still very precarious for many children to return to school (UN Office for the Coordination of the Humanitarian Affairs, 2020). With school closures, targeted attacks and death of some peers, displacement, ongoing insecurities and uncertainty about the future, students, teachers, education professionals and support staff have also experienced mental health problems with far reaching implications. Some teachers and students, particularly children reported that they suffer anxiety, fear and panic as well as depression due to the education-related attacks they experienced (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The displacements in Burkina Faso, in particular, have added another layer of psychosocial and mental health challenges. Like in most situations of displacement, displaced children often carry with them past memories of untold trauma. They have witnessed directly or indirectly the brunt of armed conflict and violence in the communities they fled from. They have seen loved ones or friends injured or even killed. Their friends have been kidnapped or lured into armed or other illicit activities. Some are affected by family separation and the challenges of making new friends as well as adjusting to new environments and schools. Displaced children must deal with the fact that their education has been interrupted. They face a dreary future. Because of this and other effects, displaced children have special needs other children may not have. In Burkina Faso, host schools have had to make modest adjustments to allow displaced children to feel welcome in their new school environment — without fear of stigma, unfair treatment or getting embroiled in fights. However, there is a general lack of adequate, proximate and timely support services and treatment in affected areas in Burkina Faso to help those affected to deal with the lasting psychosocial and mental health impacts (United Nations Security Council, 2020).

As a measure to ensure continuity of education even in dire situations of armed conflict and violence, Government has implemented the Safe Schools Declaration by establishing a "national strategy and technical secretariat on education in emergency, redeploying teachers to where there is need, taking measures to keep schools safe and open for learning, having catch-up classes for students who may have dropped out or missed classes / studies due to conflict/violence related reasons, and easing the process of enrolling displaced students in schools (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Moreover, over 4,700 children of whom 2,600 were girls, whose schools were closed due to insecurity, attended study camps organized by UNICEF and the Government of Burkina Faso in 2018. The government, with partners, also provided radio-based education for children affected by school closures (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020).

> Civil unrests precipitated by discontents over perceived and/or real unfair resource allocation or use (often in tandem with governance issues), the not fully settled grievances of the nomadic Tuaregs in the North,75 among other contentious demands, have allegedly triggered successive state takeovers by the military in a desperate bid to steer the nation away from unending tensions and conflicts driven by existing political and socio-economic fault lines.

To help displaced children to adapt well to their host school environment for example, East Region's Regional Directorate for Non-Formal Education and Pre-School Education (RDEPPNF) and the North Region's Provincial Directorate for Non-Formal Education and Pre-School Education (PDEPPNF) received basic school equipment from USAID's Transition Initiatives' (OTI) Burkina Faso Regional Programme (BFRP) for 5,000 displaced children — including 2,300 girls. 30 schools in Fada, Gayéri, Matiacoali, Namounou, and Kantchari, and 20 schools in Titao in the Nord received well over 4,600 pieces of furniture — including student and teacher desks, chairs, and benches.

The Situation in Mali

Mali is made up of 8 administrative regions — Gao, Kayes, Kidal, Koulikoro, Mopti, Ségou, Sikasso, Timbuktu — and the capital district of Bamako (UN Cartographic Section, 2021). The country has since its transition to multiparty democracy in the early 1990s (Federal Research Division, 2005) had its share of unresolved issues that continue to undermine its stability. Since 2012 in particular, Mali has been faced with demands from secessionists in the north, who have always felt unevenly represented

in the governance of their country (UN Cartographic Section, 2021). Many parts of the north and the central region have ever since become a theatre for armed violence, including security incidents (e.g., jihadist attacks) and intercommunal conflicts (e.g., between farmers and pastoralists) as well as ethnic violence — all with disastrous outcomes such as, massacres and destruction of property (Medecins Sans Frontiers, 2019). Affected areas include towns and villages located in Central Mali (e.g., in Segou and Mopti) and in regions in Northern Mali — such as, in Gao, Kidal, Timbuktu and northern parts of Mopti. A host of factors, such as, porous borders, illicit human and drug trafficking activities and armed extremist groups operating in the region have historically been blamed for much of the insecurity in the north — with spill overs in 2018 into the neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger (Danish Refugee Council, 2020).
In March 2018 for example, Dozo hunters, an armed group, attacked a Fulani Village of Ogossagou — mercilessly taking the lives of some 160 people (including women and children) and leaving another 50 injured. An unknown number of livestock was slaughtered and over 450 homes were set ablaze (International Federation for Human Rights, 2019). Tell-tale incidents such as these in Mali occur routinely in areas affected by armed conflict and violence. Civil unrests precipitated by discontents over perceived and/or real unfair resource allocation or use (often in tandem with governance issues), the not fully settled grievances of the nomadic Tuaregs in the North, (Human Rights Watch, 2021) among other contentious demands, have allegedly triggered successive state takeovers by the military in a desperate bid to steer the nation away from unending tensions and conflicts driven by existing political and socio-economic fault lines, (Field Note 3, 2021).

Presently, the security situation is very dire. As non-state Islamist armed groups launch attacks against unarmed civilians, armed forces — in counter-offensive operations to protect the people and their property — purportedly enlist the support of ethnic local defence groups or militias as a first line of security response to protect villages and the surrounding areas (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Local defence groups also operate as a much-needed buffer to boost local security. This has however raised a red flag — especially due to the excessive extra- judicial violence and use of force against those perceived as "enemy collaborators." Civilians have been caught in the middle — and inevitably, on the receiving end of all parties to the conflict.

Such violations, together with the effects of natural catastrophic events, have caused mass displacement of the civilian population in the affected regions — among them, women and children — to relatively calmer areas within and beyond Mali's borders. Because of violence by armed groups, 40,000 people (including, children) in Mali were forced to leave their homes in 2020 in search of safety (Human Rights Watch, 2021). This has led to disruption of already vulnerable family lives and livelihoods — making it even more difficult for those who have stayed (or on the run) to access life's basic needs and services, such as education, food, healthcare and water.

Education under Attack in Mali

The context of armed conflict and insecurity as described above has created the environment in which attacks on education in Mali are executed. Characteristically, attacks on education between 2013 and 2017 in Mali fit GCPEA's definition (see Section 1.0, Operational Definition of "Attacks on Education") — albeit with contextual variations. Like elsewhere, the motive(s) behind such attacks range from being political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic to reasons that are religious in nature — or a combination of these.

Attacks on education in Mali have had numerous devastating effects as described above, such as deaths and physical harm, damaged school infrastructure, school closures and school withdrawals, depriving students from accessing education, risks to children travelling to access new schools that are often further away, increased risk of child labour and early child marriage and pregnancy among students, etc.

While sporadic attacks on education in Mali may have begun somewhat earlier, those that are most noteworthy trace their origin between 2012 (when the conflict began) and in 2013 when a French-led intervention came into force. This

period saw indiscriminate destruction of the school infrastructure by armed groups intensify with much more frequency, causing wanton damage. Based on the Education Cluster Report (2013), both the armed forces and armed groups "occupied, looted, or destroyed some 130 schools" in the north since 2012. The GCPEA 2020 report also identified military use of schools and universities in Mali from 2015 to 2019 (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). Due to fighting and withdrawal of essential personnel (e.g., teachers) from schools out of fear for their lives or reprisal, many schools were forced to close (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). As reported, occupation or use of schools for military purposes had disastrous outcomes as revealed in the second half of 2013 — "explosives, including those left in schools, injured at least 77 children in the towns of Tessalit, Kidal, Timbuktu, and Gao." Schools were also damaged by explosives (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). The occupation of Kidal region, and later of Kidal town, by Tuareg groups led to the closure of seven schools — "preventing 772 children from completing the 2013-2014 academic year." The volatile security situation in Central and Northern Mali between 2014 and 2017 continued to pause threat to children's education and lives, school personnel and infrastructure. This was due to the presence of armed extremist groups operating in Gao, Kidal, Timbuktu (in the north) Ségou and Mopti (in the central). Because of threat of attack issued against the teaching personnel, more than 500 schools were forced to close affecting more than 150,000 school children who had to stay away from school for their own safety (Amnesty International, 2017).

Similar to attacks elsewhere in Central Sahel, one of the reasons commonly cited to justify attacks on education is "opposition to French, Western-style education and government institutions…"(Dufka, 2021). In Mali, over 60 attacks on education took place in 2019 alone — with over 1,100 schools closed (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020). By early 2020, Mali had 1,261 school closures (Human Rights Watch, 2021) — a 13 percent increase. At least 27 attacks on middle schools took place in June 2020, when schools reopened for children to take their exams (Dufka, 2021).

Attacks on education in Mali have had numerous devastating effects as described above, such as deaths and physical harm, damaged school infrastructure, school closures and school withdrawals, depriving students from accessing education, risks to children travelling to access new schools that are often further away, increased risk of child labour and early child marriage and pregnancy among students, etc. Besides these effects, students, teachers and other education personnel and support staff have had their psychosocial and mental wellbeing affected.

According to a mental health and psychosocial support needs assessment conducted in Mali (December 2018 – January 2019), education — attacks or threats of attacks on schools, dropping out of school due to insecurity, insufficient teachers and school infrastructure, etc., — was identified as one of the common problems and stressors in 3 out of 4 regions assessed (Ségou, Timbuktu and Sikasso) (International Medical Corps, 2018). Problems suffered included acute stress, grief, moderate to severe depressive disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc. The same report notes limited or lack of support services and treatment for such cases at the health facility or referral hospital levels and recommends, among others, strengthening of national mental health systems, mental health training, provision of services at various levels to increase proximity, developing community care networks operating around those affected, including operational referral networks (International Medical Corps, 2018).

Despite continued attacks on education by armed groups, the Government of Mali on 5th March 2018 exhibited its determination by becoming the 73rd. country to commit to safeguarding education during armed conflict (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). By endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration, Mali committed "to implementing plans and policies to better protect education," and is one of the countries that have established a national level committee charged with implementation of the Declaration (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019). Mali has also implemented gender- responsive curricula to address the impacts that conflict and attacks on education have on women and girls, including disaggregating data by gender in the national information system (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019).

3 OUT OF 4

According to a mental health and psychosocial support needs assessment 3 out of 4 regions in Mali identified education as one of the common problems and stressors.

Taking stock of progress made by the Government of Mali to fulfil its commitments to its national, regional and international obligations, a Public Statement of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict — issued through its Chair on 8th February 2021 (United Nations Security Council, 2021) — welcomed the positive steps the Government was taking "to implement a national policy on child protection as well as making effort to strengthen its national legal framework to protect children affected by armed conflict." In particular, the working relations with the United Nations country task force were seen as an important milestone towards strengthening "community-based mechanisms aimed at preventing the six grave violations" (United Nations Security Council, 2021) (see the six in Section 1.0). Also, the Statement took note of the Government's concerted effort "to identify and provide care to children released from armed forces and groups as well as to children at risk of recruitment and re- recruitment…" (United Nations Security Council, 2021).

However, the Working Group singled out the draft national law on child protection as an important legislation that needed to be speeded up, finalized and swiftly adopted "in order to implement its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRC — with regard to the recruitment and use of children below the age of 18 in armed conflict." (United

Nations Security Council, 2021). The Working Group also condemned the six grave violations committed by all parties to armed conflict urging them to:

- Provide humanitarian access and to comply with their obligations under international law;
- Fulfil their obligations as set out in the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- Release, without preconditions, all children from their ranks, hand them over to relevant civilian child protection actors, and end and prevent further recruitment and use of children in line with their obligations;
- Take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children by members of their respective groups or forces, and stressing the importance of accountability for those who commit sexual violence against children;
- End and prevent disproportionate or indiscriminate attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel as well as the military use of schools and hospitals in violation of applicable international law, as guided by the Safe Schools Declaration, which was endorsed by the Government of Mali in February 2018; and noting that the education and health systems remained deeply affected by the conflict (United Nations, 2018).

The Situation in Niger

Niger is divided into 7 Regions — namely: Agadez, Diffa, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri, and Zinder (The Nations Online Project, 2021). Even with its abundant reservoir of resources, (West Africa: Land Use and Land Cover Dynamics, 2021) Niger — a nation of roughly 18,359,000 people — is caught up in a situation of frequent droughts, insurgency and poverty. Just like its neighbours, Niger is severely challenged by the never-ending cross border attacks by extremist groups as well as a cycle of armed violence and intercommunal conflicts (e.g., between herders and farmers) (Nextier SPD (Security, Peace and Development), 2021). Cross border attacks are due to porous borders without adequate control mechanisms to deter infiltration by armed extremist groups.

From outside its borders, Niger frequently faces cross-border attacks by armed groups from its southern border — for example, Boko Haram in Nigeria (Nextier SPD (Security, Peace and Development), 2021) — while it has to deal with spill overs of armed conflict and violence in its tri-border region of Liptako Gourma it shares with Burkina Faso and Mali.

It is reported that to advance their own agenda, armed groups (some of whom are from across the porous border in Nigeria and others within Niger itself) exploit existing ethnic tensions in Niger — e.g., between pastoralists and sedentary communities / farmers) — to their own advantage by allying with communities "deemed" sympathetic to their cause or those with whom they share allegiance or common heritage (Nextier SPD (Security, Peace and Development), 2021). Communities find themselves supporting a cause, not necessarily their own — but one intended to unleash reprisal attacks against a certain population (Nextier SPD (Security, Peace and Development), 2021).

These patterns of interactions and garnering support based on group identity (the "us against them" mentality) are some of the drivers of existing tensions and conflicts in Niger. The activities of armed groups and criminal networks find sympathy from some people who already have a sense of frustration, feel discriminated and marginalized and experience real and /or perceived injustices and inequality" (Danish Refugee Council, 2020) – all in a context of state fragilities.

Due to the deteriorating situation of insecurity, Niger's regions (sharing borders with its neighbours) had since April 2021 seen an upsurge of IDPs to 17,263 in Maradi — and a 47% increase to 138,229

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IDPs in Tillabery and Tahoua over a period of one year.108 Perhaps the bloodiest massacre in Niger was the murder of some 137 people by gunmen on motorbikes that occurred on 21st March 2020 in a number of villages in southwestern Niger (Nextier SPD (Security, Peace and Development), 2021). Less than two years earlier in 2019, over 50,000 to roughly about 105,000 people in Meneka, Tahoua and Tillabery regions had been displaced due to insecurity (UNICEF, 2019). By December 2020, the number of IDPs had almost tripled to about 298,458 (Plan International, 2022).

Education Under Attack in Niger

Attacks on education in Niger have been varied including threats and attacks on students and educators, military use of schools, etc. In the GCPEA report on Education Under Attack 2020, Niger was ranked among the countries that were "heavily affected" by military use of schools and universities from 2015 – 2019 (other rankings being "very heavily affected" and"affected"). The report describes being "heavily affected" as "…500 – 999 incidents of attacks on education or military of educational facilitates or 500 – 999 students and education personnel harmed by attacks on education" (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019). The 2020 GCPEA report also categorizes Niger among the countries whose "reports documented 20 - 499 students, teachers, or other education personnel harmed by individually targeted attacks" between 2015 – 2019 (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019). It is noted by the same GCPEA report that attacks on schools and school personnel were conducted by non-state armed groups as well as police which used excessive force on student protesters, resulting in hundreds being harmed.

Specifically, in 2017, the number of schools that suffered attack were less than 10. However, in 2018, there were reportedly 20 attacks on schools. In 2019, the 60ools more than doubled to a number slightly over 40. In the same year, Niger alone had over 200 school closures (UNICEF, 2019). The attacks happened in the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua. The number of school attacks registered during the first six months of 2020 was not more than 20 (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020). During the COVID-19 school closures, a smaller number of attacks was registered on the average. However, a 2020 UNSC report on Children and Armed Conflict purports that school closures in Niger coupled with necessary COVID-19 social and physical distancing measures, that do not allow children to interact, play and socialize, have exacerbated stress, anxiety, withdrawal, agitation and urinary incontinence during sleep among children (United Nations Security Council, 2020). In addition, an armed group issued a threat of attack to two secondary schools in Tillabéri Region Niger on the 1st of June 2020 — two weeks after schools had reopened. Following this threat, schools closed for the safety of students, teachers and other personnel. In a decision taken by the Regional Department of Education in Tillabéri to safeguard students from the eminent threat of attack, all the 80 affected secondary students were taken to a securer location to continue with their education (UNICEF, 2019). Some of these threats by armed groups were directed at teachers for using the secular state curriculum (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019). It is also reported that the government of Niger in collaboration with partners provided radio-based education for children affected by school closures.

CONCLUSION

This review shows an escalation of armed conflict and violence in the Central Sahelian countries — in particular, in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger — with spill over effects across borders and a deteriorating humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Central Sahel has been experiencing a deteriorating security situation — further contributing to state fragilities and attacks on education and their consequences. The desk review also indicates that the Central Sahelian countries experience most, if not all, of the six categories of attacks on education as described with devastating consequences on students, teachers, other educators and support staff's wellbeing, including on their psychosocial and mental health. Also clear is the existence of international and continental commitments and efforts, although not enough, at various levels (global, continental and country levels) aimed at preventing and responding to attacks on education and their effects. Some of the notable efforts include interventions by the UNSC, for example, the 8756th meeting on Children and Armed Conflict that yet again condemned the continued attacks as well as threats of attacks "against schools, children, teachers and other persons …"— in total disregard of relevant international humanitarian law (United Nations Security Council, 2020). Also commendable is the Safe Schools Declaration which has coalesced global action aimed at preventing, responding and monitoring attacks on education.

There has nonetheless been progress, but more still needs to be done by all parties to fully implement the Safe Schools Declaration and other international obligations the Central Sahelian countries have committed to — in order to guarantee children in situations of armed conflict and violence access to a safe and quality education.

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Field Notes

Field Note 1: This section has been extracted from a desk review report: Child-Led Research Study on Education Under Attack and its Effects on Children and their Schooling, A Desk Review Report, ESARO, Save the Children International, July 24, 2019.

Field Note 2: Present situation analysis and review by Author.

Field Note 3: Literature review and situation analysis by report author

7
CHAPTER

EDUCATION IS OUR RIGHT:
A CHILD-LED RESEARCH STUDY IN NIGER

BY:

NKIMBA KATO, NJOROGE ANTHONY, OTIENO FIONA, NJOROGE MARYLINE AND CHEGE ALEXANDRA

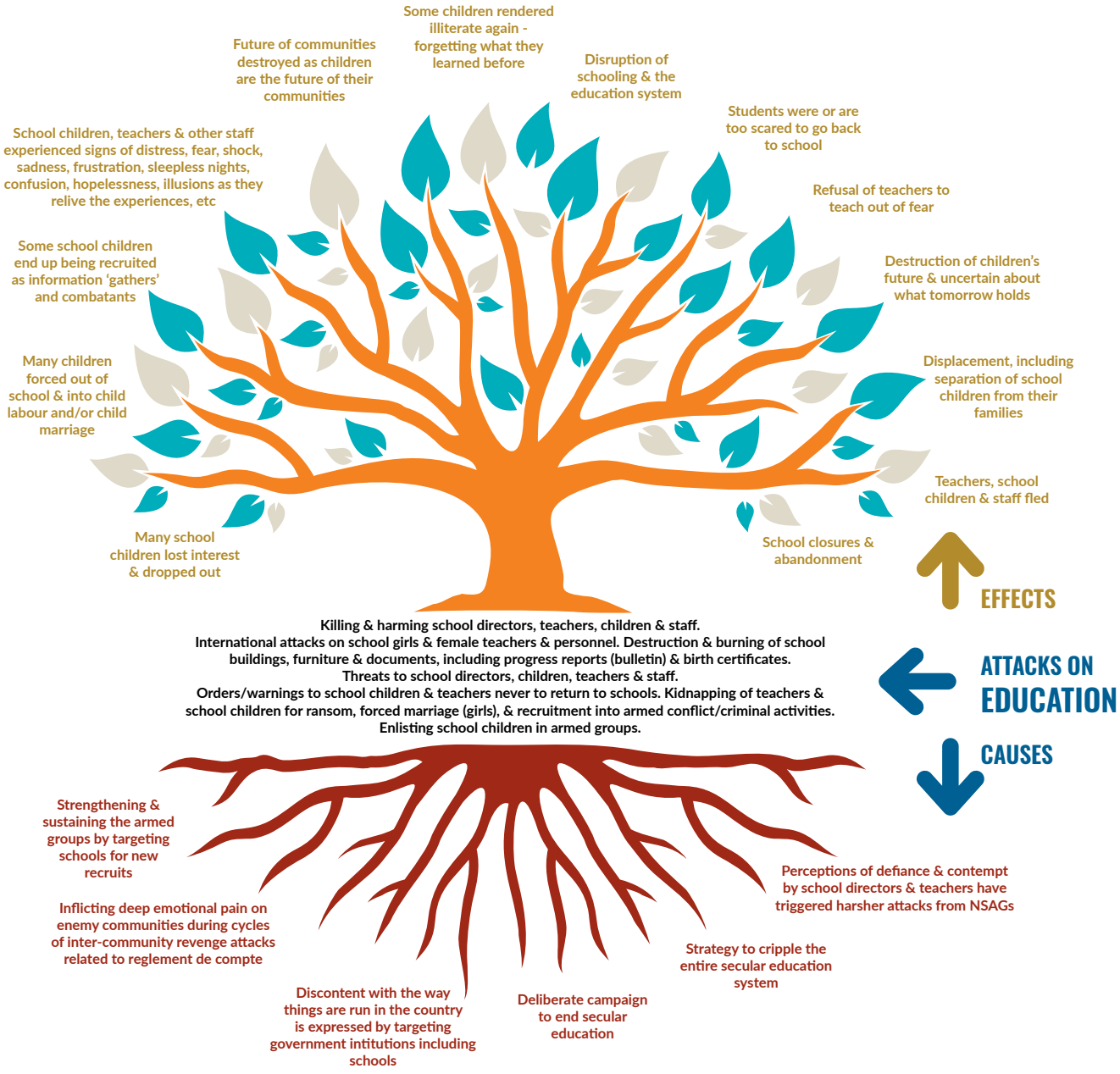
ABSTRACT

This field research was led by young researchers in Tillabéri town, Tillabéri region, in Niger. It captures children's views on attacks on their education, why education is deliberately attacked and the impact of these attacks on children and their schooling in Niger. Young researchers (five girls and five boys) aged between 15 and 18 years carried out individual interviews and group discussions to gather information from their peers using child-friendly methods and tools such as the tree analysis tool, 'dressed-up' body map, storytelling including the story of change, visioning and drawing methods. A total of 106 children (54 girls and 52 boys) from 5 to 16 years of age in the different IDP sites within the more secure centre of Tillabéri town were involved in the study as respondents.

Amadou reflects and puts his experiences of attacks on his education and his village in drawing in Tillabéri, Niger.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

SYNTHESIS OF CHILDREN'S TREE ANALYSIS ON EDUCATION IN NIGER



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report is a product of field research by young people in the Tillabéri region of Niger on the issue of Education Under Attack — the nature of attacks on education, why there is a deliberate attack on education, and how these attacks have affected children's education and schooling as well as their psychological and mental wellbeing. Children's findings and recommendations become even more significant and valuable as the armed conflict and violence in Niger — and the Liptako Gourma region (the border region shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) in particular — continues characterised by evolving cross-border dynamics with enduring negative impacts on children's education, and as a variety of stakeholders, including Save the Children, bolster efforts to address the multi-dimensional humanitarian crises, stop the escalation of violence and resolve the multiple issues driving the armed conflict (Development Education Consultancy, 2021).

The child-led research contributes to the objectives of Protecting Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa Project 2020-2023 under Sweden's strategy for Regional Development Cooperation for Sub-Saharan Africa 2016-2021 (Save The Children, 2021). This strategy provides the framework of a comprehensive Save the Children programme built around six objectives:

1) Strengthened capacity for regional actors in Sub-Saharan Africa to prevent, resolve and deal with the effects of armed conflict on children.
2) Increased influence and participation by children, youth and CSOs in processes for peace and reconciliation in Sub-Saharan Africa.
3) Strengthened capacity and competence for Country offices and Partners to engage with armed forces and groups in order to prevent, resolve and deal with the effects of armed conflict on children in Sub-Saharan Africa.
4) Strengthened humanitarian capacity and capability in Francophone conflict-affected countries in West and Central Africa, in particular local and national actors, to protect children affected by armed conflict.
5) Strengthened role of local humanitarian child protection actors in Francophone conflict-affected countries in West and Central Africa in coordinated service delivery, through increased leadership and influence and access to humanitarian funding.
6) Strengthened capacity of regional actors and civil society actors in Sub-Saharan Africa to deploy transformative and sustainable policies and actions based on evidence and learning.

Child participation is one of Save the Children's thematic areas in accordance with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as Articles 4 and 7 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which recognise that children have a right to have their views heard and considered. This implies that children have a right to be informed and involved in decisions and actions that concern them and that their points of view are considered. The project was conceptualised with child participation as a key objective and indispensable to the effective delivery of the project.

Child-led research, on which this field study is anchored, is a participatory process that aims to engage with children and young people to conduct pieces of research on related issues that matter to them. This methodology provides opportunities for children and young people in Niger to amplify their voices and contribute their views on attacks on education. It is hoped that children and young people in Niger, supported by adults, will influence decision-making by using their findings to put pressure on stakeholders and decision-makers to prevent and address the consequences of attacks on education and promote safe schools and schooling.

The purpose of this research led by children and young people was to obtain children's views on "Education Under Attack", and the effect this has had on children and their schooling as well as on children's psychological and mental health.

This study is informed by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack's (GCPEA) understanding of attacks on education defined "as any threatened or actual use of force against students, teachers, academics, education support and transport staff (e.g., janitors, bus drivers), or education officials, as well as attacks on education buildings, resources, materials, or facilities (including school buses). These actions may occur for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, or religious reasons. Attacks on education not only kill, maim, and traumatise students and personnel but also disrupt students' right to education. They impede the ability of instructors and educational institutions to offer inclusive, quality education, and they restrict students' access to schools and universities" (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018).

Boys concentrating on their tree analysis on the 5th September in an IDP site in Tillabéri, Niger

The report therefore captures children's perspectives on the following:

- Attacks or threats of attacks on schools
- Harm to students, teachers and other school employees
- Reasons why such attacks and threats happen
- The effects of these attacks and threats of attack on children and their schooling
- The impact of these attacks and threats of attack on children's psychological and mental health wellbeing
- Messages and recommendations to duty bearers and key decision makers

The next sections of this report focus on the field research carried out by children and young people in Tillabéri. A host of children who were involved in this study recounted their own experiences of attacks on education and their villages, and how these have turned their once innocent lives upside down.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

To inform the overall research design and approach, a literature review on the context of conflict in Niger, the nature of attacks on education and its effects on children's education as well as efforts by government and other stakeholders to address attacks on education, including implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) was undertaken. This literature review provides a background to children's findings that informs the analysis and recommendations.

The research took a qualitative approach and was led by children and young people — including child researchers, who have been involved in various Save the Children programme activities. Children and young people (5 girls and 5 boys) from Tillabéri, aged 15 to 17 years including three in the transition age of 18, were taken through a one-and-a-half day training to prepare them to lead the field data collection process. To achieve this, tailor-made training for the children and young people was purposefully designed (Field Note 1, 2021) (concept; appreciate the importance of child participation in such a process; understand child participation principles, and gain skills in applying child-friendly research methods and tools.

The field research methods, which the young researchers were equipped to use, were specifically tailored to suit the fragile, albeit calm, context at the time, COVID-19 standard operating procedures and a tight research schedule. The following child-friendly tools were used: "dressed-up' body map for sensitivity to context, tree analysis, drawing (picturing research) and What-Why-How storytelling — including, stories of change. Young researchers, with hands-on support from their young mentors, also conducted a risk mapping assessment of the targeted locations and developed child protection and safeguarding guidelines for the exercise. Given the nature of the subject children were going to research, they were also equipped to provide basic psychosocial first-aid support to child respondents who would need it..

Children and young people took the lead, and with overall guidance from the adult consultant researchers, carried out the data collection. A lessons-learnt exercise on a daily basis helped to adapt and improve the field research process. Emphasis was also placed on ensuring a conflict-sensitive process

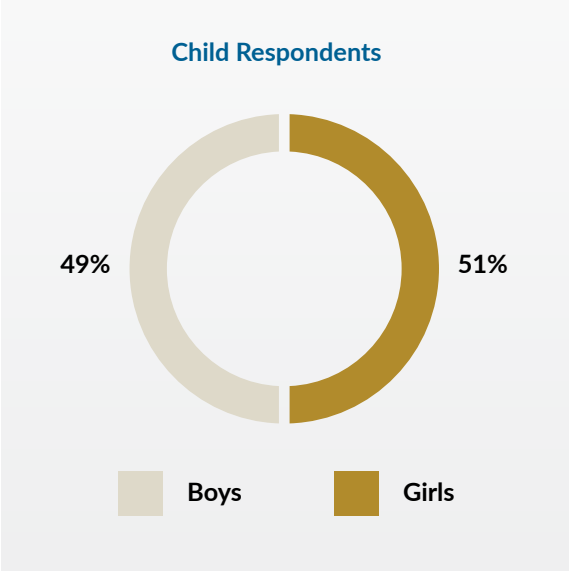
A training for young researchers in Tillabéri, Niger, 5th September, 2021

guided by Do No Harm principles and creating 'safe spaces' for all children involved to share their experiences and perspectives. Considerations, such as girls-only and boys-only discussion groups, were made to capture the sensitive gender perspectives and to provide safe spaces for girls to feel free to express themselves in a context where they rarely have opportunity to share their views in public fora. Save the Children staff in Niger and from the Regional Office played a pivotal support role of inclusive sampling and mobilising child respondents, liaising with local leaders, providing logistical support

and ensuring that all children (i.e., researchers and respondents) were protected and safe.

The field research was planned for three days in Tadress, Banizoumbou and Koira Kano where some of the internally displaced persons in Tillabéri are currently settled. Children gave their time to recollect and share their experiences of attacks on their education through drawings — as well as by sharing their personal stories and engaging in participatory group tree analyses. Children also proposed solutions on the future they would like to see and experience. These are presented in action-packed advocacy messaging and concrete recommendations.

Child researchers gathered data from a total of 106 child respondents (54 girls and 52 boys) between the ages of 5 and 16 as shown in the pie chart (Field Note 2, 2021). Although due to context sensitivities, it was not possible to generate descriptive statistics disaggregated along other lines — except for sex/ gender — the child respondents included among others, the Zarma Songoi, Peulh/ Fulani, Tuaregs and Hausa communities.



Due to the limited time available, the lead researcher and the co-researcher worked together with the young researchers to carry out the initial analysis of data collected during each field research day in Tillabéri. The final analysis was done by the lead researcher supported by the co-researcher — in line with child participation ethical considerations. This was meant to ensure that all children's information, experiences, and views — collected by the child researchers through group discussions, drawings, the tree analysis and one-to-one interviews via What-Why-How storytelling including personal stories of change — were accurately captured with careful documentation and full acknowledgements, without exposing both the child researchers and respondents to any form of harm or risks associated with the sensitivities in this study. The data analysis process included data sorting and reduction, data display, verification and conclusion drawing. Examination of evidence and meanings as well as the noting of themes, regularities and patterns happened concurrently during the data analysis process at various levels.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section discusses findings on and analysis of: the nature of attacks and threats of attack on schools, school children, teachers, and other people working in schools; the reasons why deliberate attacks are carried out; and the impacts of attacks and threats of attack on school children, teachers and other school personnel, including effects on their psychological and mental wellbeing.

Nature of Attacks on Education in Niger

Children's plain accounts of attacks on their education in Niger provide contextual nuances to the GCPEA's definition of education under attack. Children experienced or witnessed attacks as follows: abandonment, closure and destructions of schools; school premises and playground contaminated with landmines or unexploded explosives; threats issued to school directors; orders / warnings to children and teachers never to return to school; refusal by teachers to teach out of fear or threats on their lives; and kidnap of teachers and children — including school children — for ransom, forced marriage for girls and/or recruitment into armed or other criminal / illegal activities.

1. Physical attacks or threats of attack on students, teachers, and other education personnel

As reported by children in Niger, threats were issued against school directors, teachers and other

Boys recount the attacks on their communities and school in Inates - their community of origin, leaving them without school and nothing at home. The attackers came in vehicles and motorbikes. The military tried to engage them. Schools and children were attacked. This situation forced their families to leave their homes and settle in the present location.

Drawing by boys, Tillaberi, 6th September, 2021

school personnel. Threats were made by what children consistently referred to as armed groups who engaged in nonmainstream, unauthorised and/or criminal armed activities. To bring the education system to its knees, school directors have been targeted — and some even killed — for failing to heed repeated warnings issued by such groups. In a tree analysis discussion with girls, it was mentioned: "It was during break time in 2019, when the school was attacked. The school director was killed in office" (Field Note 3, 2021).

The findings revealed that teachers have been harassed or killed as well because they are the school's lifeline. According to children's findings, the attackers gave a precise time when everyone was expected to vacate the school (Field Note 4, 2021) and failure to comply came with consequences. "If teachers don't heed the warnings, they are killed. [In certain cases] attackers kill those who resist them"(Field Note 4, 2021). During a tree analysis, 6 boys reported: "The attackers came to our school and told us not to come back to school again. They didn't want us to study. They know that with education, we'll know our rights. Teachers refused to return to class to teach. We had nowhere to turn to. We have no future. Why target us! We don't work for government"(Field Note 5, 2021). Children were left scared, and without a school to attend. Also see Drawing 1 for children's experiences. In a separate analysis, other boys individually recounted their stories as shown in Box 1 below (Field Note 5, 2021).

Box 1

> Our director was warned to stop teaching. All personnel were told to leave school. Everyone was told to leave. The school was not attacked, but it was forced to close. This happened because of conflicts between two communities."
>
> *Abdou Saley (not real name), aged 15, Tandress IDP site, Tillaberi, 5th September 2021*

> It was 2018 on a wednesday evening. We were playing. Then suddenly, we heard gunshots. We realised our village had been attacked. We ran away to hide ourselves. The armed group attacked our school because they didn't want us to have a future. Our parents stopped us from going to school. Teachers refused to teach because they were scared. I would like to go back to school if I can getscholastic materials."
>
> *Djafar (not real name), aged 15, Tandress IDP site, Tillabéri, 5th September 2021*

Some of the children's accounts are rooted in the events around some of the worst attacks in Niger that occurred on 10th December, 2019 in proximity to Inates in Tillabéri — a Nigerien settlement community at the border with Mali (Armstrong, 2019). This saw many families in Inates flee their homes *en masse*, leaving behind everything and trekking hundreds of miles to find safety in the much safer zones of Tillabéri.

According to UNICEF, more than 300 schools had by 2020 been forced to close their doors to students — affecting some 22,000 students countrywide. Regions such as Tillabéri, Tahoua and Diffa have been particularly hit hard by security threats (UN Children's Fund, 2021).

2. Destroying schools and school documents, teaching/learning materials and furniture

Although children revealed that not all schools were destroyed during attacks, their findings severally showed that many schools were calculatingly burnt down during attacks. "Our school was burnt down"— was a common thread running through every field research site (Field Note 6, 2021). While the motive of the recent school fires on the 13th of April 2021 that destroyed 25 out of 38 classrooms and tragically caused the death of some 20 young children aged between 5 and 10 in a school in Niamey remained unclear, they bear resemblances to fires reported in children's findings (About Education International, 2021). Use of explosive devices during attacks on schools has been highlighted in other reports (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020). Other accounts by children captured in Box 2 shed more light on the specifics and extent of the school destructions. According to children, attackers destroyed the school furniture, teaching and learning materials leaving schools without vital class documents (e.g., class registers) and instructional materials to conduct classes (Field Note 7, 2021) — for example, teaching aides, textbooks, notebooks, wall charts and maps. Other important documents usually stored in the director's office, such as, students' files with performance reports (*bulletin)* and birth certificates, were not spared either.

In Niger, a birth certificate is an essential document that can hinder access to vital social services, such as, education and health. In these very volatile contexts, children's protection is also greatly at risk since 'undocumented' children are legally unknown — potentially denying them the necessary legal safeguards in courts of law in cases such as trafficking or kidnapping underage children for recruitment into armed (a form of attack on education) and/or other illegal activities including espionage, forced labour, forced/child marriage and prostitution.

Box 2

> The attackers came on motorbikes. They destroyed books, desks and all the materials in the classroom. Each class had a cupboard with materials. Everything was destroyed. Vendors' food sold to children during break time was also destroyed."
>
> *Girls during a tree analysis*
>
> The attackers came in cars and on motorbikes. They came to our classrooms and told teachers and students to get out of the classrooms. They destroyed all the materials in the classrooms - including chairs and tables. They shot all over the classrooms."
>
> *6 boys during a tree analysis*
>
> The school was destroyed. Teachers were killed. Soldiers were killed too. The attackers wanted to disrupt education so that no one goes to school."
>
> They didn't attack our teachers, but they carried all the tables from the classrooms to the playground and set them on fire."
>
> When they attacked our school, the teachers and students left the school. The school was burnt down."

Children's findings have shown that, during attacks on education, children — including those in school — have variously been exposed to the six grave violations against children in times of violent conflict, such as, recruitment or use of children in armed forces and armed groups; attacks on schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence and abduction of children (UNICEF, 2022).

3. Recruitment of school children at school or in communities

During a tree analysis, boys reported that once attackers reached their school most of the teachers and students ran away. The attackers pursued a campaign to persuade those who stayed behind to join their struggle and be trained on how to use guns (Field note 8, 2021). In another tree analysis elsewhere, boys confirmed that there was a recruitment drive to enlist students. Though the attackers were from a particular ethnic group, they not only encouraged students from their own group to join them to fight their 'enemies'; but also, they lured students from other communities sympathetic to their cause to get involved (Field Note 8, 2021).

Children indicated that some students from both communities joined — not as combatants, but rather as child informers because they were only twelve years of age at the time (Field Note 8). This corroborates other reports that parties to the conflict have reportedly used local tensions and grievances within and across the Mali-Niger border communities to their advantage — by exploiting their vulnerability to enlist especially older boys and male youth in their cause (Armstrong, 2019). Speaking on condition of anonymity — and in privacy — a boy confided that some of the boys he knew want to join armed groups due to what they perceived as unfair treatment and/or lack of work opportunities for the youth.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1261 of 1999 condemns recruitment or use of children as soldiers [or combatants] as one of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict and calls on all parties concerned to put an end to this violation (United Nations Security Council, 1999).

An intense tree analysis on the education under attack, 5th September 2021, Tillabéri.

4. Intentional targeting of school girls and female teachers/personnel

Children's findings revealed that girls and women in schools have been specifically targeted during attacks on schools (Field Note 9, 2021). During analysis, (Field Note 10, 2021) it became clear that during attacks young girls of school-going age have also been abducted and forced into marriage by their captors. The wahaya practice of trafficking underage girls who are forced into early marriage as fifth wives or slaves is still present in Niger. Whatever the motives behind the attacks, they have also in certain instances been used to conceal this practice within the spate of attacks on schools and villages.
While occupying the Security Council presidency, Niger held its first open debate on the 10th of September 2020 exclusively on the protection of education from attacks. Among the UNSC president's key highlights was the concern that "girls and women may be the intended victims of attacks targeting schools [...leading to violations such as...] incidents of [...] abductions, forced marriages, sexual slavery, human trafficking [...] which may further impede the continuation of their education" (United Nations Security Council, 2020). UNSC Resolution 1261 of 1999 criminalises abduction of children for any purposes and sexual violence against children as grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict (United Nations Security Council, 1999).

UNSC Resolution 1261 of 1999 criminalises abduction of children for any purposes and sexual violence against children as grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.[27]

Reasons behind attacks on education in Niger

Just as in cases elsewhere, attacks on education in Niger are motivated by a variety of closely intertwined reasons. Some are political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic and/or religious in nature — or a combination of these (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). Some of the reasons given by children for the attacks on schools include spates of unending intercommunal reprisal attacks, dissatisfaction with the "way things are run in the country" and a campaign to end secular education (Field Note 11, 2021). Children's perspectives on why education is attacked are loaded with motives ranging from religious/ideological, political to military ones — all embedded within a complex ethnic context, where attackers with extreme religious and ideological orientation may have a firm foothold (see Box 3 and other perspectives in this section).

Deliberate campaigns to end secular education

Analysis of children's findings revealed that, during attacks, school directors and teachers have been directly targeted — threatened, beaten, harmed, kidnapped or even killed (Field Note 12, 2021). Attempts to rebuild schools after destruction have in certain cases been reciprocated with harsher

Box 3

"The attackers didn't want the French system, so they didn't want us to study. Instead, they wanted us to join them. They wanted to train children on how to use guns and get involved. Our teachers were so scared - they never returned to school."

A group of boys during a tree analysis, Tillabéri

"The attackers wanted us to study arabic and join their cause. They didn't want us to study French."

Analysis of children's findings from Tadress, Banozoumbou, and Koira, Kano in Tillabéri

"They want students to learn Quranic education, and if teachers resist, they are killed."

Girls during a tree analysis. Banozoumbou, 6th September 2021

"The attackers hate government; they also hate western education."

Boys during a tree analysis. Banozoumbou, 6th September 2021

"My school was attacked. Our teachers had to abandon our school and ran away. They attacked our school because of our type of education. They also killed people in the village. They wanted to kill government soldiers and force them to leave our village."

8 year old girl, Fatumata (not her real name), Tallibéri, 5th - 7th September 2021

Girls reflecting on their situation after experiencing an attack on their education, 5th September 2021, Tillabéri.

penalties by attackers who interpreted this as contempt or defiance.

For instance, a group of boys explained, "[After the first attack] the school community tried to reconstruct their school. The attackers returned, killed two teachers and burnt down the classrooms (Field Note 13, 2021). Reasons given ranged from instilling fear in teachers to abandon teaching or punishing them for noncompliance to "expressed orders", among others. These attacks are aimed at making the secular school system and its entire infrastructure completely unfunctional. Also see Box 2 for related accounts.

Religious-based armed groups with extremist tendencies regard the western-style secular education as *haram* [sin] because, in their opinion, it denies children the kind of moral and spiritual upbringing as well as conduct required in their faith. This was frequently mentioned throughout the field research32 as explained by many children (see Box 3) and one of the boys who said that "Teachers are targeted because they are accused of teaching "wrong things".

It is not unusual to see ethnic communities with (suspected) links to groups with extremist tendencies adopting the same adage during intercommunal attacks and counterattacks to justify attacks on schools. In explaining this trend, one child remarked that "These conflicts have been going on for a very long time since the times of our grandfathers. But they were never religious" *(Field Note 14, 2021). The ethnic undertones behind targeted attacks on schools are alluded to in Box 1.

Box 4

> We really don't know what the attackers want. They attack everything - people and schools."
>
> Reglement de compe (settling community scores) by people who don't like one another is a main reason why schools and villages are attacked.."
>
> They tols us to leave our village, and anyone found after 8 o'clock in the night would be killed. Here, there is no school. I miss school."
>
> Children who have no power are affected. Yet, children are the future of their communities."
>
> The attackers came to school and told us never to come back to school again. The attackers feel that education will give us power to know our rights."

Girls doing their analysis on attacks on their education, 5th - 7th September 2021, Tillabéri.

It was also intimated that because of grievances related to dissatisfaction with "how things are run in the country", most of the attacks target government facilities and infrastructure — and schools cannot be spared. In some cases, communities have been asked to pay Zakat (offering) towards the cause; and seeing no way out of it, they have obliged (Field Note 15, 2021).

Long-term strategy to destroy the future of "enemy" communities

Children in several discussions reiterated that schools are deliberately targeted to inflict long term damage to the "enemy" community's future — knowing that educated children are the future of their communities. Denying children an education, keeping them ignorant and unempowered gives the "enemy" an upper hand in the long run. This strategy is underpinned by a culture of Regelment de compte [settling community scores] that is entrenched in inter-community/inter-ethnic conflicts. The following synthesis of children's findings is reconstructed using children's verbatim responses to paint a vivid picture of their thoughts (see Box 4) (Field Note 16, 2021).

A strategy to increase chances of recruiting school children into armed groups and struggles

Targeting children during attacks at school is a recent and emerging phenomenon (Field Note 17, 2021) given that in the past it was mainly school directors and teachers who were targeted. Children's findings showed that attackers in certain cases have opted for a more friendly approach designed to cajole students at school and/or from certain community groups to join their cause. Children and young people are viewed — by parties to the conflict — as a vital source of support to their causes. For parties who are very keen on keeping in good standing within communities, a charm offensive or persuasion as a strategy — using contextually relevant arguments young people can relate to after destroying their schooling which kept them constructively engaged and hopeful for a better future — was seen as more beneficial to their cause, especially in their recruitment drive. Children's findings showed that some students joined, for instance as explained by Moussa (not real name) in Box 5. It cannot be said with certainty that students joined voluntarily out of conviction, or they joined out of fear of a possible reprisal to themselves or their other family members.

Box 5

> The attackers persuaded students (from two of the three ethnic communities) to join their group. Since they were still underage, the students were enlisted to gather information within the communities."
>
> *Moussa (not real name), 14 years, Tillabéri*

Others on the other hand wanted to join because "they felt unfairly treated or were unemployed"(Field Note 18, 2021). All in all, a very needy, vulnerable, unengaged, and unemployed young population may find the promise for 'a secure future' too tempting to resist. Left with no other choice, children and other young people are often forced to join (or collaborate with) the rank and file of (sections of the) parties involved in the conflict.

The effects of attacks or threats of attacks on education

The spate of attacks on schools and villages left communities no other choice, but to leave their homes to places where they could keep their families safe. Findings from children living in displacement reveal how attacks on education have affected their schooling and lives. The consequences of attacks on schools, school children, teachers and other personnel working at schools are multiple and intertwined.

Some of these include: abandonment and closure of schools; disruption of schooling and general education activities; teachers abandoning their profession altogether and other school personnel leaving work; psychological and trauma related effects; displacement, including separation of school children from their families; destroying of children's future and that of their communities; and increased chances of children joining armed groups and forces (willingly, coerced or forced). Some of the effects are also highlighted in Box 1 and 2 and will not be repeated here, and all are summarised in the tree analysis in the Executive Summary.

1. Closure or abandonment of schools and disruption of schooling

Closure or abandonment of schools manifested in a number of ways. According to children's findings, (Field Note 19, 2021) threats of attacks, and eventually, the actual attacks that saw entire schools and villages set on fire forced parents and their children to flee to safety — consequently, leading to school closures or abandonment, and ultimately, disrupting children's education and schooling. The consequences are well depicted by children's voices as captured in Box 6.

Abdoulkader's and Souleymane's experiences (see Box 6) echo the voices of many other children who participated in this research. Attacks on their schools and homes disrupted their education; and now they face a tough choice whether to reenter school again or face a bleak future. The level of frustration in these children's lives can only be imagined. Throughout the research locations, anecdotes such as these were rife.

Box 6

> The attackeed our school to deny us a future... I forgot everything I was studying. In the end, I can't read and write. Now, I'm illiterate".
>
> *Abdoulkader (not real name), age not given, during a tree analysis with boys, Tadress IDP site, Tillabéri, 5th September 2021*
>
> Our education was affected. No one goes to school. Everyone left the village because the attackers wanted to occupy it."
>
> *Souleymane (not real name), 16 years, during a tree analysis with boys, Tadress IDP site, Tillabéri, 5th September 2021*

2. Psycho-social/ effects of attacks on education

Children affected by attacks on their schools vividly remember what they had to endure as terror rolled out before their very eyes. They recount how these dreadful events have affected their psychological and mental health. The destruction and burning of their schools, records and furniture, the death and physical attacks on school children, directors, teachers and other personnel are some of the traumatic events the children experienced. These have left emotional scars, frustration, and other signs of distress (Field Note 20, 2021)(see more details in Diagram 1). From their accounts, children's emotional wellbeing continues to be exacerbated by the displacement conditions they live in presently and are still trying to cope.

When asked during a tree analysis, "When asked during a tree analysis, "How do you feel about the attacks on your school and how has this affected you?", children responded very sadly. Some examples are presented in Box 7: (Field Note 21, 2021).

Box 7

> Physically, I could hardly move when the attack happened. My heart was pumping very fast, and I was very scared. Then, I felt anger because I couldn't understand why they were doing this. At times, I can't sleep at night. Whenever I get thoughts about what happened, I jump out of sleep. I just can't get the thoughts out of my mind. I'm scared about my future - where should I go...? What should I do? I'm very confused. I ask myself, "Will I be able to go on with school and help my parents? I have many questions in my mind".
>
> *Boubacar (not real name), 16 years*
>
> Whenever I see motorbikes, I feel an attack is about to happen. As I sleep at night, I get nightmares and bad dreams. I can't sleep well. I also get scared whenever I see soldiers."
>
> *Faridatou (not real name), 8 years*
>
> When the attacks happened, my heart started beating very fast. I still get illusions. I keep asking myself - "Is anyone else trying to flee like me? My hands start trembling."
>
> *Adamou (not real name), Tadress IDP site, Tillabéri, 5th September 2021*

Diagram 1: Sample psychological impacts of attacks on education in Niger

The young male and female mentors (names withheld), who double as national scout and counsellor for children and young people at risk in Tillabéri, provided affected children with basic psychological first aid to help them cope with their feelings and frustrating situations (Field Note 21, 2021). However, many children refused to talk about their situation or remained silent. A number of children said that they don't want to return to their villages. They are scared they could be attacked again. They were constantly living in fear. It was unclear if the children were getting any counselling to cope with the situation.

Children such as these need support from qualified psychosocial counsellors to help them cope. Children mentioned that there is a glaring gap in such services needed to address psychosocial issues affecting children as well as their caregivers / parents, all still suffering from the effects of violent conflict (Field Note 22, 2021). In line with the resolution on attacks on schools in Africa, there is an urgent need to "provide non-discriminatory assistance to all victims of attacks on education and give them physical and psychosocial support" (About Education International, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Children's findings paint very troubling experiences children, teachers, and other adults associated with schools have gone through during attacks on education, and how these have impacted their lives including their psychological wellbeing. The government of Niger in 2015 affirmed its commitment by endorsing the SSD. In fact, during its presidency at the Security Council, Niger's theme during an open debate in September 2020 was "The plight of children in times of armed conflict: attacks on schools, a serious violation of children's rights"— further demonstrating its commitment to the SSD. While a lot still needs to be done, there are some efforts for example to establish centres in more secure zones to enable children in less secure areas to relocate and continue with studies. SSD workshops at the national and regional levels have been extended to more secure areas in the periphery to enable the training of actors/ stakeholders (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015). Against a still very volatile context, more however still needs to be done to fully implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

Girls doing their analysis on attacks on their education, 5th - 7th September 2021, Tillabéri.

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Messages from Children

Children's recommendations to school management, community leader's and local administration

Work together to:

- Provide a safe education for all children.
- Protect children and teachers from attacks.
- Support children with psychosocial problems to enable them cope better.

To state administrations and armed groups

- Protect teachers and children from abductions and attacks.
- Protect schools from attacks and destruction.
- Negotiate, talk peace, and reconcile with one another to allow life to become normal again and schools and villages to be safe for children and their families.
- Create safe conditions for school children to gain an education because children are the future of their communities.

Other Recommendations

To the Government of Niger

- Align and push all current Safe School interventions to build firmly on the theme "The plight of children in times of armed conflict: attacks on schools, a serious violation of children's rights" — a theme chosen by Niger in September 2020 for an open debate during its presidency at the United Nations Security Council;
- In line with the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA), finalise and/or roll out the National Action Plan for implementation of the SSD and ensure that the plan includes the protection of women and girls; (Universal Periodic Review, 2021).
- In line with the resolution on Attacks of Schools in Africa passed in 2019, (About Education International, 2021.
    - Implement and support the SSD to ensure that all students and teachers, men and women, can learn and teach safely;
    - Systematically, investigate attacks on education, and prosecute those responsible; and
    - Provide non-discriminatory assistance to all victims of attacks on education and give them physical and psychosocial support.
- Use context-appropriate, community-based bottom-up approaches for long lasting solutions for peace and reconciliation to address enduring cycles of inter-community and inter-ethnic conflicts.
- Negotiate with NSAGs to refrain from attacking schools as well as targeting school children, students and other school personnel drawing on lessons learnt from other Sahelian countries such as Mali.
- Urge all parties to the conflict to refrain from any attacks on education; and in collaboration with development / humanitarian partners, build the capacity of conflict parties on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the SSD Principles, informed by lessons learnt from past trainings that benefited some NSAGs.
- Consolidate efforts /collaboration and build synergies and trust among like-minded stakeholders to make safe schools a reality in conflict affected zones. Apply Do No Harm principles and other context- / conflict-sensitive approaches when rolling out SSD guidelines.
- In collaboration with development agencies and partners as well as health providers, put strategies and interventions in place to provide adequate and comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to children, teachers and other school staff who have experienced attacks on education to boost their resilience to cope.
- Reintegrate birth certificate replacement processes for young and older children who lost their birth certificates to attacks on education as part of protection services in emergencies / humanitarian interventions.

To the African Union

- To the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary- General for Children and Armed Conflict and other relevant United Nations bodies
- Compel listed parties to the conflict in Niger to end and prevent the violations and restrain from any indiscriminate attack on perceived enemy strongholds that may put innocent school children and other people's lives in danger.
- Strengthen all monitoring and reporting partnerships among the UN-led MRM, Education Cluster, ministries of education, and civil society.

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Field Notes

Field Note 1: See "Training Guide: Empowering children and young people with skills to carry out a child-led research activity": A

Field Note 2: Due to sensitivity of the research theme, real names of the child researchers and participants are not shared in this report. Only pseudo names are used to identify child researchers and respondents in this report.

Field Note 3: After fieldwork, female researchers recounting findings from a tree analysis with girls held at Banizoumbou, Tillabéri, 6th September, 2021

Field Note 4: Recounts of children findings from a tree analysis, Tillabéri, 6th September, 2021

Field Note 5: Tree analysis with boys, Tadress IDP Site, Tillabéri, 5th September, 2021

Field Note 6: Children's findings in Tadress, Banizoumbou and Koira Kano, Tillabéri, 5th – 7th September, 2021

Field Note 7: Children's findings in Tadress, Banizoumbou and Koira Kano, Tillabéri, 5th – 7th September, 2021

Field Note 8: Focus group discussions using a tree analysis, Tadress, Banizoumbou and Koira Kano, Tillabéri, 5th – 7th September, 2021; exact location not mentioned due to sensitivities surrounding child recruitment.

Field Note 9: Children's findings, Tillabéri, 5th - th September, 2021

Field Note 10: Analysis together with the young researchers, Tillabéri 6th September, 2021

Field Note 11: Analysis of children's findings from the field research in the IDP communities in Tillabéri, 5th - 8th September, 2021

Field Note 12: Analysis of children's findings from Tadress, Banozoumbou, and Koira Kano in Tillabéri

Field Note 13: Tree analysis by boys, anizou mbou site, Tillaberi, 6th September, 2021

Field Note 14: Change story, Abdalla (not real name), aged 15,Tadress,5th September, 2021

Field Note 15: Context and situation analysis during session, Tillabéri, 4th September, 2021

Field Note 16: A reconstructed synthesis based on children's verbatim responses, children's findings, Tillabéri

Field Note 17: Initial Analysis with the young researchers and their mentors, Tillabéri 5th September, 2021

Field Note 18: Analysis of children's findings from Tadress, Banozoumbou, and Koira Kano in Tillabéri

Field Note 19: Analysis of children's findings from Tadress, Bazoumbou, and Koira Kano in Tillaberi

Field Note 20: First hand observation by the Lead and Co-Consultants, collaborated by accounts of the young mentors (who are also scouts/ provide counselling services to children and young people at risk) who counselled some children during field research, triangulated with analysis of children's findings from Tadress, Banozoumbou, and Koira Kano in Tillabéri

Field Note 20: Reported by the young researchers during initial analysis after fieldwork and collaborated a young male mentor, who counselled Boubacar (not real name), 16 years, in Tillabéri. Exact location remains undisclosed for safety and security reasons, 5th -7th September, 2021

Field Note 21: Children's findings, Tillabéri, 5th -7th September, 2021

Field Note 22: Children's findings, Tillabéri, 5th -7th September, 2021

Field Note 23: African Union, Continental Education Strategy for Africa, 2016-2025, CESA 16-25, pp. 8, 22 & 26. https://au.int/sites/ default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa_-_english-v9.pdf

8
CHAPTER

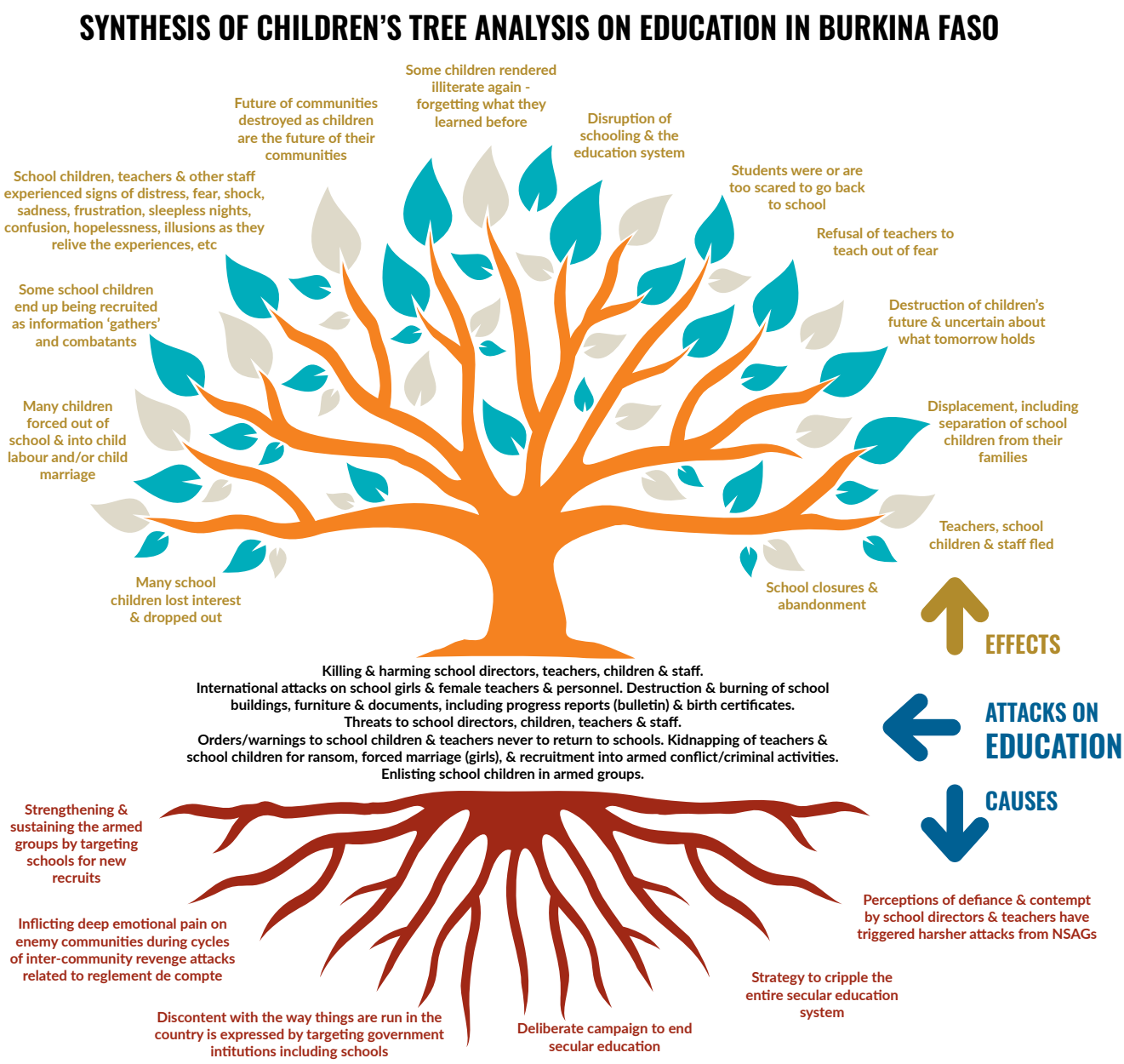
SAVE OUR EDUCATION:
A CHILD-LED RESEARCH STUDY IN BURKINA FASO

BY:
NKIMBA KATO, NJOROGE ANTHONY, OTIENO FIONA, NJOROGE MARYLINE AND CHEGE ALEXANDRA

ABSTRACT

This field research was led by young researchers in Dori town from Dori region, in Burkina Faso. It captures children's views on attacks on their education, why education is deliberately attacked and the impact of these attacks on children and their schooling in Burkina Faso. A total of 225 children (147 girls and 78 boys) aged between 5 and 17 years participated in the child-led research to share their experiences and perspectives on attacks on education. The child respondents were from communities displaced by conflict. Child researchers used child-friendly tools — such as the drawing method, dressed-up body map, group tree analysis, and the What-Why-How storytelling (including, stories of change) technique — to express their candid views on attacks on education, and the effect this has had on their lives and schooling as well as on their mental health.

The following is a summary of the findings:



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report is a product of the field research by children and young people in the Dori region of Burkina Faso on the issue of Education Under Attack — the nature of attacks on education, why education is deliberately and constantly under attack, and how these attacks have affected children's education and schooling as well as their psychological and mental health wellbeing. Children's findings and recommendations become even more significant and valuable as the armed conflict and violence in Burkina Faso — and the Liptako Gourma region (the border region shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) in particular — continues to be a conflict hotspot characterized by evolving cross border dynamics with enduring negative impacts on children's education. Equally, they are worthy of consideration as a

variety of stakeholders, including Save the Children, heighten efforts to address the multi-dimensional humanitarian crises, stop the escalation of violence and resolve the multiple issues driving the armed conflict (Development Education Consultancy, 2021).

The child-led research contributes to the objectives of the Protecting Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa Programme 2020-2023 under Sweden's strategy for Regional Development Cooperation for Sub-Saharan Africa 2016-2021 (Save The Children, 2021). This strategy provides the framework of a comprehensive Save the Children programme built around six objectives.

1. Strengthened capacity for regional actors in Sub-Saharan Africa to prevent, resolve and deal with the effects of armed conflict on children.
2. Increased influence and participation by children, youth and CSOs in processes for peace and reconciliation in Sub-Saharan Africa.
3. Strengthened capacity and competence for country offices and partners to engage with armed forces and groups in order to prevent, resolve and deal with the effects of armed conflict on children in Sub-Saharan Africa.
4. Strengthened humanitarian capacity and capability in Francophone conflict-affected countries in West and Central Africa, in particular local and national actors, to protect children affected by armed conflict.
5. Strengthened role of local humanitarian child protection actors in Francophone conflict-affected countries in West and Central Africa in coordinated service delivery, through increased leadership and influence and access to humanitarian funding.
6. Strengthened capacity of regional actors and civil society actors in Sub-Saharan Africa to deploy transformative and sustainable policies and actions based on evidence and learning.

CChild participation is one of Save the Children's thematic areas in accordance with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as Articles 4 and 7 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which recognise that children have a right to have their views heard and considered. This implies that children have a right to be informed and involved in decisions and actions that concern them, and that their points of view are considered. The project was conceptualised with child participation as a key objective and indispensable to the effective delivery of the project.

Child-led research, on which this field study is anchored, is a participatory process that aims to engage with children and young people to conduct pieces of research on relevant issues that matter to them. This methodology provides opportunities for children and young people in Burkina Faso to amplify their voices and contribute their views on attacks on education. It is hoped that children and young people in Burkina Faso, supported by adults, will influence decision-making by using these findings to put pressure on stakeholders and decision-makers to prevent and address the consequences of attacks on education and promote safe schools and schooling.

Purpose of The Research

The purpose of this child-led research was to obtain children's views on "Education Under Attack", and the effect this has had on children and their schooling as well as on children's psychological and mental health well-being. This study is informed by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack's (GCPEA) understanding of attacks on education defined "as any threatened or actual use of force against students, teachers, academics, education support and transport staff (e.g., janitors, bus drivers), or education officials, as well as attacks on education buildings, resources, materials, or facilities (including school buses). These actions may occur for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, or religious reasons. Attacks on education not only kill, maim, and traumatise students and personnel but also disrupt students' right to education. They impede the ability of instructors and educational institutions to offer inclusive, quality education, and they restrict students' access to schools and universities" (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), 2021).

The report, therefore, captures children's perspectives on the following:

- Attacks or threats of attacks on schools
- Harm to students, teachers and other school employees
- Reasons why such attacks and threats happen

- The effects of these attacks and threats on children and their schooling
- The impact of these attacks and threats on children's psychological and mental health
- wellbeing
- Messages and recommendations to duty-bearers and key decision-makers

The next sections of this report focus on the field research carried out by children and young people in Dori. A host of children who were involved in this study recounted their own experiences of attacks on education and their villages, and how these events have changed their lives.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

To inform the overall research design and approach, a literature review on the context of conflict in Burkina Faso, the nature of attacks on education and its effects on children's education as well as efforts by government and other stakeholders to address attacks on education, including implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) was undertaken. The research took a qualitative approach and was led by child researchers, most of whom were involved for the first time in the Save the Children programme activities. Child researchers (5 girls and 7 boys) aged between 12 and 17 years of age — supported by one young male of 19 years of age who served as a role model for the child researchers — underwent a two-day training in child-friendly participatory methodology and tools to carry out their own research with other children affected by conflict, presently living among host and displaced communities in Dori.

Girls having a discussion on their experiences of attacks, 16-18 September, Dori, Burkina Faso

In this case, tailor-made training for the children and young people was purposefully designed (Save The Children, 2022), to facilitate a speedy but quality data collection process — with children's safety, protection, and security in mind.

The young researchers were equipped through participatory methods to build a common understanding of the "Education Under Attack" concept; appreciate the importance of child participation in such a process; understand child participation principles; and gain skills in applying child-friendly research methods and tools.

The field research methods, which the young researchers were equipped to use, were specifically tailored to suit the still fragile (albeit calm) context at the time, COVID-19 standard operating procedures and a tight research schedule. The following child-friendly tools were used: a dressed-up body map, a tree analysis, drawing (picturing research) and What-Why-How storytelling — including, stories of change. Young researchers also conducted a risk mapping assessment of the targeted locations and developed child protection and safeguarding guidelines for the exercise. Given the nature of the subject children were going to research, they were also equipped to provide basic psychosocial first aid support to child respondents who would need it.

The data collection process

Children and young people took the lead and, with overall guidance and support from the adult researchers, teachers and social workers, carried out the data collection. A lessons-learnt exercise as well as a rapid group analysis of key issues with the young researchers on a daily basis helped to improve the field research process as well as bring out issues that needed deeper probing. Emphasis was also placed on ensuring a conflict-sensitive process and creating 'safe spaces' for all children involved to share their experiences and perspectives.

After data collection, a girl researcher transferring data from sticky notes into her research notebook.

Considerations, such as girls-only and boys-only discussion groups, were made to capture the gender perspective. Save the Children staff in Burkina Faso and from the Regional Office in West Africa played a pivotal support role in inclusive sampling and mobilising child respondents, liaising with local leaders, providing logistical support and ensuring that all children (i.e., researchers and respondents) were protected and safe.

The field research was planned for 3 days in a secure place in Dori where different groups of boys and girls from the displaced and host communities converged to participate in the research. Children shared their experiences, perspectives and proposed recommendations.

The girls and boys who participated

A total of 225 children (147 girls and 78 boys) aged between 5 and 17 years participated in this research as shown in the pie chart. Although due to context sensitivities, it was not possible to generate descriptive statistics disaggregated along other lines except for sex/gender, the child respondents included, among others, children from displaced communities of Arbinda, Boundon, Boundougei, Dangadi, Gaussaliki, Kautaugon, Liky, Solhan, Gorgadji, Dani, Sebba, Gorgogue and Goudebo as well as from the host community of Dori.

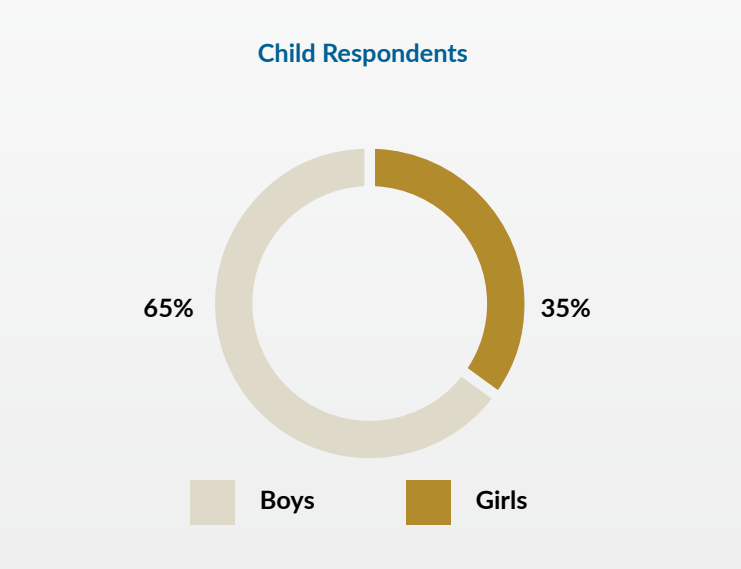
Many of the displaced child respondents come from some of the most affected towns/villages in Burkina Faso — such as Gorgadji in Seno Province (in the north) located in the tri-border zone, a notorious epicentre of the most violent mix of armed activities that have plagued the Central Sahelian countries, most especially, Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. Others were displaced from Arbinda village in Soum Province, in the Sahel region, which suffered one of the deadliest attacks on the 24th December 2019 that left at least 115 people dead (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2019).

Many others were children newly displaced from Solhan village, also in the Sahel region — which on the 4th of June 2021 witnessed one of the bloodiest massacres in Burkina Faso that saw at least 132 people lose their lives. Sadly, children were among the perpetrators of these heinous carnages (Amnesty International, 2021).

Analysis of data

Due to the limited time available, the lead researcher and the co-researcher worked together with the young researchers to carry out the initial analysis of data collected during each field research day. Children were also allowed to assess how fieldwork during the previous day went to enable adaptation of the process based on the lessons learnt. The final analysis was done by the lead researcher supported by the co-researcher — in line with child participation ethical considerations. This was meant to ensure that all children's information, experiences, and views — collected by the child researchers through group discussions, drawings, the tree analysis and one-to-one interviews via What-Why-How storytelling including personal stories of change — were accurately captured with careful documentation and full acknowledgements, without exposing both the child researchers and respondents to any form of harm or risks associated with the sensitivities in this study.

The data analysis process included data sorting and reduction, data display, verification and conclusion drawing. Examination of evidence and meanings as well as the noting of themes, regularities and patterns happened concurrently during the data analysis process at various levels.



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section discusses findings on an analysis of the nature of attacks and threats of attack on schools, school children, teachers, and other people working in schools; the reasons why deliberate attacks are carried out; and the impacts of attacks and threats of attack on school children, teachers and other school personnel, including effects on their psychological and mental health wellbeing.

Nature of Attacks on Education in Burkina Faso

Accounts by Burkinabe children of attacks on education shed more light on GCPEA's definition of education under attack as stipulated in section 2.0. Group and individual children's accounts depict attacks on education as follows: known or unknown attackers riddling classrooms with gunfire; indiscriminate or selective killing of teachers or other school personnel; issuing directives to stop classes; inscribing anti-French graffiti or Arabic writings on classroom walls; sending children away from school; setting entire school classrooms and/or other infrastructure on fire; attempts to and/or actual kidnap of children; and occupation of schools and leaving behind planted explosives everywhere, in and around as well as along the way to school.

Physical attacks or threats of attack on school children directors and teachers Children's findings

DRAWING 1
School under attack by explosives and gunfire - Mohamed (not real name) aged 14 years from Arbinda

in Burkina Faso show that attackers employed various strategies to inflict heavy damage in their attacks on schools, such as using surprise attacks and disguising themselves as government defence forces or foreign intervention force. Children mentioned that attackers would disguise themselves as regular forces to confuse and take their victims by surprise (Field Note 1, 2021). Children explained these strategies and the nature of the attacks they experienced (see examples of surprise attacks in Box 1 and how attackers disguised themselves in Box 2).

In one sudden attack by unidentified assailants on a school, attackers came looking specifically for the director and school children were sent home with the message never to come back to school because western education was haram (sin). A 12-year-old boy, Issouf (not real name) displaced from Gorgadji village narrated (Field Note 2, 2021): "We were in class when armed men attacked our school. They surrounded our school. They asked where the school director was. The director and the teachers ran and hid in the garden. We were told to leave the school. They said school was haram. The school was set on fire. The village chairman was killed". The targeting of school directors or other school personnel and their property was corroborated by evidence presented, for example, during the trial of two convicted members of an armed group – "... they torched the school director's home and took off with two motor scooters" (Qantara.de, 2021).

Box 1

"Some people were killed while others were kidnapped and taken hostage. The surprise attack happened during breaktime while children were at the playground. Not done, the attackers pitched camp in the school."

Tree analysis by boys, Dori, 18th September 2021, Dori

"It was coming to the end of the 2018/19 school year. It was around 9am and we were in class. Suddenly, we saw armed men on Aloba motorbikes riding straight towards us. We thought it was Desforcesdefense. Some of them went and stopped right in the school compound. Others went to the police post, where people were processing their identification cards. They shot at them. One person was killed, and many others injured. We had to leave our village."

Sayouba i(not real name) aged 12years displaced from Gorgadji Village 16th September 2021,

Drawing depicting graphic scenes of attacks on schools, injuring children and teachers, 16-18 September 2021, Dori

Box 2

We mistook attackers to be Desforcesdéfense (defense forces)... The school was surrounded, burnt down and occupied - leaving some teachers injured. Some students were also kidnapped."

Tree analysis, Dori, 18th September 2021, Dori

It was a black morning in 2019. An unidentified armed group attacked us at school as we were having classes. At first, we thought it was the white army (Europeans or French); but as it turned out, it was an armed group. The attackers wrote something in Arabic and left. When parents heard about this, they rushed to school to look for their children. The mayor's office, the police post and the market were already on fire."

Ousseni(not real name) aged 17years displaced from Gorgadji Village

Box 3

One day, attackers came to our village and did some surveillance. The village didn't have any volunteer de defense pourle population (village defense group). Then, they came to our school and kidnapped some students and teachers."

Adama (not real name) aged 13 years, 16th September 2021,

The attackers took some students to join their group, though many other children including some of their teachers were able to run away."

Tree analysis by a group of boys, 16th September 2021,

When they attacked our school, the attackers told us (children) to leave school and go home. They killed some teachers and took the school director with them."

Asseta (not real name) 15 years old girl from Tenkodogo, 17th September 2021,

Attackers came to my schol, killed teachers and kidnapped some children. A few other children and their parents were killed."

Rasmata (not real name) 15 years from Arbinda, 17th September 2021, Dori

When they came to school, they started shooting. They yelled at students to get out of the school. The attackers took two students with them. before leaving, they warned students, 'If we come back and find anyone teaching or leaving, we'll kill everyone."

Aminata aged 17 years from Sebba Village, 18th September 2021, Dori

Attackers stormed into our school, stopped an exam process, and took some of our teachers with them."

Kadidia, 17th September 2021, Dori

Abduction or taking teachers, children and other school personnel hostage

As highlighted in Box 1 and 2, children's findings indicated that there were incidents of abductions or taking specific members of the school community hostage. Those targeted were mainly the school directors and teachers. In certain cases, school children and other school personnel were not spared (Field Note 3, 2021) and children were reportedly abducted for recruitment into armed groups (see below and Section 4.2). Incidents of school related abductions in Burkina Faso are vast (see children's experiences in Box 3) and are also well documented elsewhere (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In an attempt to protect students from being abducted, the teachers frantically made calls to the

security forces to come to their rescue (Field Note 4, 2021). It is unclear from children's findings whether there was any rescue response or other intervention to the teachers' desperate calls. Abductions by attackers came up many times as children shared their experiences. Both male and female adults or children in or outside the school were targeted. Children did not provide reasons why some children were singled out and killed. However, Aminata's story (see Box 3) may offer some possible reasons why teachers or children at school or elsewhere would pay a hefty penalty during a school attack. In a tree analysis, boys reported, "Attackers kidnapped some children to scare others" (Field Note 5, 2021).

Not heeding attackers' threats or warnings were perceived as insubordination. Taking some students with them could as well have been an advance warning to students and/or their parents of the consequences if they defied their orders. These were some of the strategies attackers used in an attempt to annihilate the system of education (See more discussion on reasons in the next section). Abduction of school and other children by armed groups was associated with the intention to recruit them into armed group activities (see Box 4) (Field Note 6, 2021).

Children, in their analysis of findings, mentioned that the frantic calls by desperate teachers to the security forces were aimed at finding ways to rescue students from likely abduction and forceful recruitment of unwilling children into the rank and file of armed groups (Field Note 7, 2021). The use of children as fighters and handymen recruited to do "odd jobs" within the ranks of armed groups has been cited by witnesses who saw children "helping the fighters to burn down houses…" in some of the deadliest attacks in mid-2021 in Solhan village (Rédaction Africanews, 2021) — in the vicinity of Dori town in Sahel region. United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1261 of 1999 condemns recruitment or use of children as one of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict and calls on all parties concerned to put an end to this violation (United Nations Security Council, 1991).

Destroying schools, school documents and furniture

Whenever a village was besieged, key government infrastructures such as schools and hospitals would be targeted (United Nations Security Council, 1991). United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1261 condemns attacks on schools or hospitals as one of the six grave violations (Field Note 8, 2021). 'Setting entire school classrooms and property on fire' was a common thread that ran through all children's findings gathered during the successive research days in Dori. Fires indiscriminately destroyed not only the buildings but also the school furniture (e.g., benches, chairs, desks and tables) and vital instructional and learning materials— including, children's notebooks and other valuables.

For instance, during a tree analysis, boys mentioned that "the offices were burnt down. This is where all important children's dossiers [files containing children's information, for example birth certificates] are kept" (Field Note 9, 2021).

During analysis of their findings, the young researchers confirmed that some of the vital documents destroyed by fire during school attacks included: children's files containing their birth certificates and school progress/performance records (Field Note 10, 2021). Apart from being

Box 4

"When the school was attacked, there was total destruction. The whole building was burnt, the balckboard, tables and important documents were completely vandalised. The attackers occupied some of the buildings they didn't destroy. There were many casualties. Some teachers were injured. Others mistreated. Some of the teachers and other young students were abducted (.....) to be trained and (...join) the armed group. A fraction of the teachers and students who were not labducted are in hiding (out of fear) and are ooking for a place they would feel safe."

Tree analysis with boys, 18th September 2021, Dori

Box 5

"The attackers burnt bulletin (end of the year school reports) and other important files... No document was spared."

Tree analysis with girls 18th September 2021, Dori

"Attackers shot everywhere. Then they burnt the classes and documents belonging to teachers. The children fled, leaving their books and other things behind."

Aristide (not real name) 11 years, originally from Gorgogue 16th September 2021, Dori

"The whole school was burnt down, and everything inside and around it."

Idrissa (not real name) 12 years, originally from Gorgadji Village 16th September 2021, Dori

"All the school buildings and school materials were set on fire. The school had to close."

Aziz (not real name) explaining during a tree analysis 16th September 2021, Dori

"Before the attackers left, they burnt down our school as well as other schools around. This was a very big shock for us.."

Dramani (not real name) 12 years, originally from Gorgadji Village 16th September 2021, Dori

legal proof for a child's identity/citizenship as well as providing children access to vital social services, e.g., education, birth certificates are a vital legal tool in protecting children from all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation — including child labour, child marriage and child recruitment into armed forces and groups. Drawing 1, 2 and 3 and the voices of children on how schools, documents and furniture were destroyed are included in Box 5.

DRAWING 2
"The attackers came to our school, burnt down the classrooms, the national flag was taken down and all school papers were set on fire. Marcel (nor real name) boy, 15 years, Dori, explaining his diagram.

Violence against girls and women during attacks on schools

During a tree analysis exercise, children reported that attackers also took women with them (Field Note 11, 2021). They abducted women to serve as maids and 'wives' (Field Note 12, 2021). While not exclusively in school settings, reports of sexual violence against girls and women during attacks came up repeatedly among girl respondents (Field Note 13, 2021). In one school attack, girls and female teachers were sexually assaulted (Field Note 13, 2021). Box 6 highlights Asséta's story (Field Note 14, 2021) and depicts some peculiar experiences of female teachers during attacks on education, such as the one who was pregnant.

UNSC Resolution 1261 of 1999 criminalises abduction of children for any purpose and sexual violence against children as grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict (United Nations Security Council, 1999).

Box 6

> The attackers came to our school. They ordered us to get out of our classes. They killed our maitresse (female teacher) and two maitres (male teachers). Then they burnt down the classes and the school canteen. Another pregnant maitresse was also killed together with her unborn baby. We looked on powerless and in total shock. There was nothing we could do. The children were crying. We had to flee and come to Dori."
>
> *Asseta (not real name), aged 12, girl from Gadjie*

REASONS BEHIND ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN BURKINA FASO

Children's findings indicate that attacks on education in Burkina Faso are motivated by a variety of reasons. Though with some slight contextual variations, these reasons are not significantly dissimilar to those identified by children in Mopti (Mali) and Tillabéri (Niger).

The largely "freelance" armed activities — be they political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious in nature or a combination of these (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018) — exploit similar community grievances and tensions to advance armed groups' interests and goals.

Children's analysis revealed that armed groups take advantage of the vulnerability of community members, particularly older boys and male youth (e.g., their unemployment, deep sense of discrimination / unfair treatment and persecution, etc.) to get them involved in fighting their cause (Field Note 15, 2021). The interlinked reasons why education is deliberately targeted during armed groups' attacks are discussed below and include boosting the numbers of the rank and file of armed groups and bringing an end to secular education and imposing sharia law.

Boosting numbers in the rank and file of armed groups

Child respondents indicated that schools were partly attacked to coerce boys and girls to join armed struggles to annihilate education — the very foundation to a better future children were aspiring to have (Field Note 16, 2021). To recruit children, a combination of strategies was used, such as (Field Note 17, 2021) issuance of threats or warnings stopping teachers from teaching and pushing children completely out of school, thus rendering them redundant without other viable options and therefore making them vulnerable to recruitment. As shown elsewhere, the recent 4th of June 2021 massacres in Solhan village had the active involvement of children as perpetrators (Field Note 18, 2021). Others included maligning secular education as haram/immoral; short-or long-term abductions/

hostage taking of children for forceful recruitment into armed and/or other illicit activities; hostage taking and/or killing of school directors and teachers to keep schools closed; cajoling children into joining armed activities by exploiting their genuine sense of fear about their future and the dire situation they live in, e.g., inadequate basic social services, unemployment, discrimination and unfair treatment / persecution, *reglement decompte* (settling scores by rival parties), etc.

Efforts to bring an end to secular education and impose Sharia way of life

With little or no hesitation, "They don't want us to study" was the spontaneous response that came out from the majority of children who participated in this child-led research (Field Note 19, 2021). Children were referring to foreign non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) with radical, extremist ideology and/or local ones with links or subscribing to similar worldviews. "They are opposed to western education and want to implement the Sharia" (Field Note 20, 2021). "They said the current education has a bad influence on children and everyone should study the Koran" (Field Note 21, 2021). "They think schools are teaching children to be impolite and engage in sin". These and other explanations by children (see Box 7 and 8) depict reasons why education is attacked.

Box 7

> When the attackers reached the school compound, they didn't find anyone at school - apart from one teacher who was in the office. They didn't kill him. They told him to tell others - We don't want French; we want Quranic education. They destroyed documents belonging to children. The, they proceeded to the teacher's house and destroyed it."
>
> *Rachida (not real name), aged 17, originally from Touca village, 18th September 2021*

DRAWING 3
A girl documenting her experiences using the What-Why-How storytelling technique

From children's findings, a consistent pattern emerged. The attackers vented their disdain for secular education by setting ablaze anything in the Latin alphabet or script — essentially, everything inscribed or written in French at school — e.g., identification (ID) cards, individual papers, birth certificates, charts, documents, files, textbooks, notebooks, etc. Often times, their campaign to end secular education was accompanied by inscribing anti-French graffiti or Arabic writings on classroom walls as well as depicting secular education as *haram* (sin) (Field Note 22, 2021). These reasons, as identified by children, are similar to the reasons given by some of the perpetrators of these attacks. For instance, related to the court case cited under Section 4.1, the accused confessed to targeting the school because "the teaching there was against Sharia Law" (Qantara, 2021).

From children's drawings, the national flags were not spared either since they are a symbol of the state.

The effects of attacks or threats of attack on education

Children's experiences reveal that the consequences of attacks on schools, school children, teachers and other personnel working at schools are multiple and intertwined. Some of these include: closing of schools; disruption of schooling and examination processes; displacement of school children, teachers, directors and their families; crippling of the education system; psychological and trauma related effects; destroying children's future by disrupting their education; and increased chances of children joining armed groups and forces (willingly, coerced or forced). Many of these effects are elaborated in Section 4.1 and others are further discussed below.

Closure or abandonment of schools and disruption of schooling

The closure or abandonment of schools was caused by multiple factors. According to children's findings (Field Note 23, 2021), threats of attacks, and eventually, the actual attacks that saw entire schools and villages set on fire forced parents and their children to flee to safety —consequently, leading to school closures or abandonment, and ultimately, disrupting children's education and schooling. This effect was explained by many children including Djamila (see Drawing 4).

During a tree analysis, Yacouba (not real name) said: "Attackers burnt down most of our school buildings, and everything in them. Then they occupied the others. The school was forced to close" (Filed Note 24, 2021). In another analysis, boys stated, "Our teachers and other school personnel were attacked, and the school was then turned into a camp by attackers. We abandoned the school altogether" (Field Note 25, 2021).

DRAWING 3
Our school was attacked by armed men who killed teachers, students and burned down everything.

Adama, aged 14 years from Boukouma explaining his diagram.

Box 8

> They wanted us to stop studying l'education occidentale (European education), but to study l'education Quranic to help us to be linked with God and have a better life in heaven. They shot at teachers because they are the pillars of l'education occidentale."
>
> *Tree analysis by boys (group 3), 16th September 2021, Dori*

In other instances, schools were not physically attacked as explained by Farida (not real name) aged 13 years from Dani village, "Attackers went to the school. But they didn't attack. They simply asked our teachers to close the school" (Field Note 26, 2021). During an attack on Goudebo village, some children lost both parents. Unaccompanied, the orphaned children dropped out of school and went to Dori. They now work for people to earn a living (Filed Note 27, 2021). Telltale anecdotes in children's findings such as these paint a concrete picture of the effects of attacks on education and many children's schooling that was brought to a complete halt.

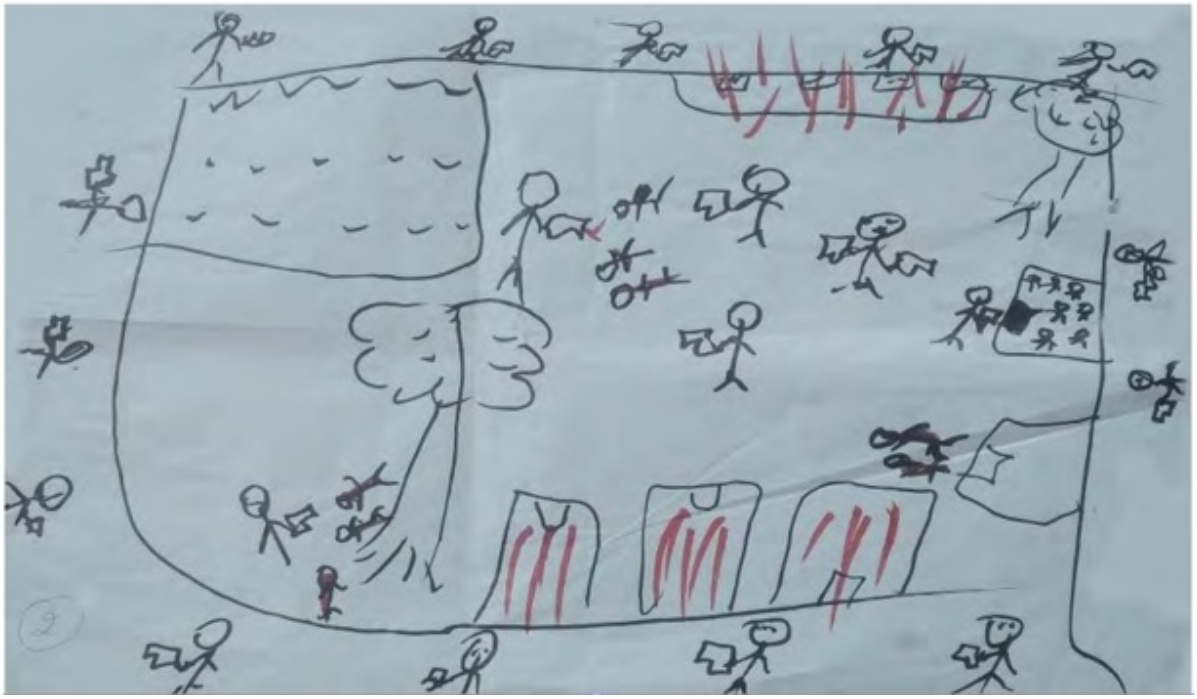
Psychosocial/ psychological effects of attacks on education

Children who participated in this child-led research explained that their emotional hurts are caused by many factors related to attacks on education. School children saw their peers, friends, directors, and teachers being injured and/or even killed or they heard about these incidents. They heard direct threats by attackers which drove them to fear and panic. School children saw their schools, school documents and furniture being destroyed or burned down. Some are affected by family separation and the challenges of making new friends as well as adjusting to new environments and schools (ICRC, 2021). Displaced children must deal with the fact that their education has been interrupted. Often, they face a dreary future. As a result, school children experience psychological /psychosocial effects as captured in Box 9. Also, through their drawings, such as Amina's (Drawing 5), children expressed how they felt or still feel after experiencing traumatic attacks on their schools, school children, teachers, directors, etc (Filed Note 28, 2021). While some children did not want to talk about their experiences, some were able to share. As Issaka (not real name, boy, age not given) explained: "They arrived in armored cars. They were masked. They asked everyone to get down on the ground. The children were crying and, terrified, the teachers ran away. I felt fear, anger and sadness". Safiatou (not real name), a 15-year-old-girl from Sebbi village reported, "A friend of mine was so traumatized that she failed her school examinations. This was after the attackers came to Sebba village, killed people and injured others" (Filed Note 29, 2021). Other children, through the body mapping exercise, indicated that they were in constant fear of people on motorbikes wearing turbans and were suspicious of other people and no longer trusted easily.

During a tree analysis exercise, 13-year-old Alassane from Gorgadji had this to say (Field Note 30, 2021) "Whenever I see many people I don't know, I feel like running away". In a separate tree analysis, 17- year-old Seydou from Arbinda talked about the psychological impact attacks on education have on children (Field Note 31, 2021): "Children are affected mentally and some no longer eat well because they lack appetite. Some of them are scared. They don't want to talk about this because they are scared. Teachers are afraid to go back to school because they fear they will be attacked". These impacts are numerous as discussed above and are summarised in Diagram 1.

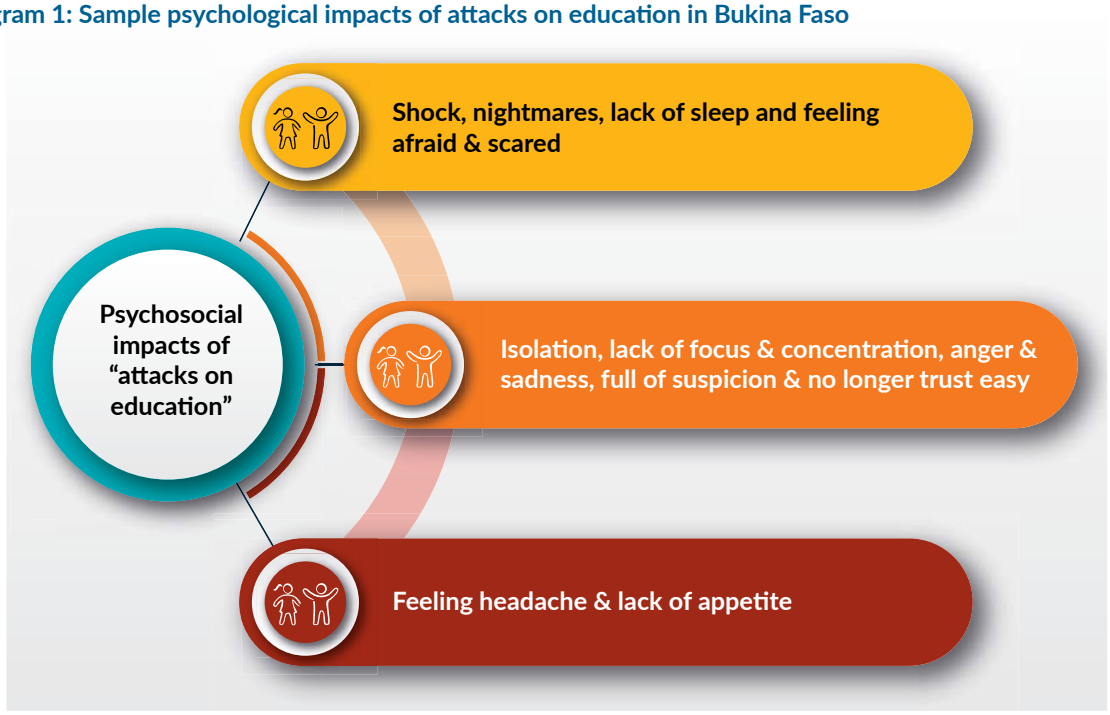
DRAWING 5
"I have nightmares, I'm afraid to go out somewhere. I lock myself in one place without speaking. I'm bored and I'm too scared. I don't want to talk about it because I have a headache..."

Amina (not real name), age not given, Dori



DRAWING 4
In my village not far from Arbinda, attackers came to my village and told people to leave. When they returned two days later, people were still in the village... That evening, attackers returned and surrounded the whole village. Some entered people's homes and forced them to come out. They started killing them. The didn't kill any children. They gathered us together and locked us in a big house... They set other homes on fire to force those who are hiding in them to come out. Half of our school was also burnt down. They massacred many people and stole their property.

Diagram 1: Sample psychological impacts of attacks on education in Bukina Faso



CONCLUSION

This child-led research in Burkina Faso brings forth evidence and analysis from children's findings on attacks on schools, and how these have affected education and schooling as well as the impact all this has had on their psychological and mental health wellbeing. Children's findings in Burkina Faso corroborate existing literature on the nature and impact of attacks on education — "...[non-state] armed groups...explicitly targeted government schools, most commonly, by burning and looting educational facilities and threatening, abducting and killing teachers..." (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020).

As a measure to ensure continuity of education even in dire situations of armed conflict and violence, the government has taken actions aligned with the Safe Schools Declaration by establishing a national strategy and technical secretariat on education in emergencies, redeploying teachers to where there is a need, taking measures to keep schools safe and open for learning, having catch-up classes for students who may have dropped out or missed classes / studies due to conflict/violence related reasons, and easing the process of enrolling displaced students in schools (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Also, though trials against perpetrators in school attack cases are still very infrequent, the government of Burkina Faso through its court specialising in terror cases had two convicts belonging to an armed group sentenced to twenty years in prison for setting a primary school on fire in the 2nd of May 2018 in Bafina (Qantara, 2021), (Seibert, 2021). While this demonstrates governments commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD), more needs to be done by government and other stakeholders to prevent attacks on education in Burkina Faso as stipulated in the recommendations below.

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Messages from Children

Children's Recommendations

To school management, community leaders, and local administration work together to:

- Construct more schools in Dori for children who have been displaced by conflict.
- Protect children and teachers from attacks. To state administration, defense and security forces and armed groups
- Protect teachers and children from abductions and attacks.
- Protect schools from attacks and destruction.
- Negotiate, talk peace, and reconcile with one another to bring peace to Burkina Faso.

Other Recommendations

To the Government of Burkina Faso

The government of Burkina Faso is highly commended for adopting the five-year "National Strategy for the Education of Students in Areas with High Security Challenges (2019- 2024)" in February 2019 and taking various initiatives to implement it amidst glaring challenges related to and/or around attacks on education. In line with children's findings and recommendations, we urge government to extend — in addition to other assistance — more support to all children by providing:

- Overcrowded and under-resourced schools with more classrooms, school kits, desks and other urgent supplies to help them to meet their current needs triggered by the upsurge in people / children displaced from their communities;

- Psycho-social support to students affected by conflict and violence currently living in displacement; and
- Psycho-social support to their school directors, teachers and other school personnel to enable them to perform their duties more effectively.
- Capacity building actions for educational staff to facilitate the learning of children psychologically affected by crises
- Creation of alternative safe learning spaces adapted to the specific needs of children affected and troubled by conflict.

In line with the resolution on Attacks on Schools in Africa passed in 2019, (About Education International, 2021) strengthen collaborations with humanitarian and development partners to continue supporting the government to:

- Implement and support the Safe Schools Declaration to ensure that all students and teachers, men and women, can learn and teach safely;
- Systematically investigate attacks on education, and prosecute those responsible; and
- Provide non-discriminatory assistance to all victims of attacks on education and give them physical and psychosocial support.
- Use context-appropriate, community-based bottom-up approaches for long lasting solutions for peace and reconciliation to address enduring cycles of inter-community and inter-ethnic conflicts.
- Work to ensure that non-state armed groups refrain from attacking schools, as well as school children, students and school staff. This could involve training and popularisation of Safe Schools Declaration as well as its guidelines.
- Urge all parties to the conflict to refrain from any attacks on education; and in collaboration with development/humanitarian partners, build the capacity on conflict parties on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the SSD Principles, informed by lessons learnt from past trainings that benefited some NSAGs.
- In collaboration with development agencies and partners as well as health providers, social workers, put strategies and interventions in place to provide adequate and comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) to children, teachers and other school staff who have experienced attacks on education to boost their resilience to cope.
- Reintegrate birth certificate replacement processes for young and older children who lost their birth certificates to attacks on education as part of protection services in emergencies/humanitarian interventions.

To the African Union

- Together with the Government of Burkina Faso, support domestication and implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) 56.
- To the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary- General for Children and Armed Conflict and other relevant United Nations bodies.
- Compel parties to the conflict in Burkina Faso to end and prevent the violations and refrain from any indiscriminate attacks on perceived enemy strongholds that may put innocent school children and other people's lives in danger.
- Strengthen all monitoring and reporting partnerships among the UN-led MRM, Education Cluster, ministries of education, and civil society.

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Field Notes

Field Note 1: Storytelling, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 2: Tree analysis, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 3: Analysis of children's findings, child-led data collection, Dori, 16th -18th September, 2021

Field Note 4: Tree analysis by boys, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 5: Tree analysis, Dori, 18th September, 2021

Field Note 6: Tree analysis with boys, Dori, 18th September, 2021

Field Note 7: Tree analysis by boys, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 8: Analysis of children's findings, Dori, 16th - 18th September, 2021

Field Note 9: Boys, Tree analysis, Dori, 18th September, 2021

Filed Note 10: Joint analysis with the young researchers led by the Lead Researcher, before start of field research, Dori, 17th September, 2021

Field Note 11: Tree analysis by boys, Dori, 16th September 2021

Field Note 12: Tree analysis by girls, Dori, 16th September 2021

Field Note 13: Stories and tree analyses by girls, Dori, 16th -18th September, 2021

Field Note 14: Stories and tree analyses by girls, Dori, 16th -18th September, 2021

Field Note 15: Story by Asséta, 12-year-old girl, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 16: Analysis of children's findings from child-led research studies in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, 2021

Field Note 17: Analysis of outcomes during research training and from children's findings in Dori, 14th -18th September, 2021 5th October, 2021

Field Note 18: Analysis of children's findings, Dori, 16th -18th September 2021

Field Note 19: Tree analysis by boys (group 1), Dori ,16th September 2021

Field Note 20: Tree analysis by boys (group 2), Dori, 16th September 2021

Field Note 21: Samira (not real name), girl, 15 years of age, Dori, originally from Arbinda, 17th September, 2021

Field Note 22: Analysis of children's findings, Dori, 16th - 18th September, 2021

Field Note 23: Analysis of children's findings, Dori, 16th -18th September

Field Note 24: Tree analysis by boys, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 25: Tree analysis by boys, Dori, 17th September, 2021

Field Note 26: Farida, aged 13 years, 17th September 2021

Field Note 27: Dori Story of change, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 28: Drawing by children especially from the age of 5 to 12 years— including older ones, who preferred to put their views in pictures, Dori, 16th -18th September 2021

Field Note 29: Tree analysis with boys, Dori, 18th September, 2021

Field Note 30: Change story, Dori, 16th September, 2021

Field Note 31: Thoughts about psychological impact following a tree analysis, Dori, 18th September, 2021

9 CHAPTER

MODELING A LOCALIZED INSTITUTION – INDIVIDUAL APPROACH IN BUILDING SAFE PLACES FOR CHILDREN IN CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS IN AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

BY:
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ABSTRACT

Globally, over 420 million children live in conflict-affected areas and experience armed violence. In Africa, it is in the forms of the proliferation of incidents of armed violence by extremists such as the Al Shabaab in East Africa and Boko Haram in West Africa; protracted conflicts within states such as in the greater Sudan, Somalia, regions of Central Africa and the Arab spring in the North of Africa; and the increasingly urban character of armed violence in a number of cities. Disregarding the nature or the impact of conflicts, children suffer severe injuries, trauma, abduction, enslavement, deaths, dropping out of schools and health concerns. International and local institutions and individuals work to achieve long-term stability, security and prosperity as key pillars in the protection of children from conflict. The paper reviewed secondary literature focusing on institution-individual continuums that proposed adaptive capacities or its intent on building safe spaces for children from conflict in Africa. The intersection of institutions and individuals-built capacities positively influenced the wellbeing of children from conflict in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, over 420 million children live in conflict-affected areas and experience armed violence. According to Save the Children (2019), 142 million children live in high-intensity conflict zones characterized by annual 'battle-related deaths' of 1,000, soaring cases of grave violations against children in the last two decades (Save the Children, 2019). In conflict settings safe spaces for children are disrupted during flight and displacement of populations. Concerns for the needs of children are significant but the urgency to address them lacks (USAID, 2017; UNICEF, 2009).

In armed conflict, international legal provisions for children and basic standards of conduct are flouted and the rights of children in the landmark Human Rights Treaty and the 1989 UN Convection on the Rights of the Child are gravely violated (Save the Children, 2019). Children suffer physical injury or death from indiscriminate military action or indirect displacement and breakdown of essential community support structures and derived services.

Safe spaces (SS) are established as a bold mechanism to protect children (Ager, Metzler, Vojta & Savage, 2013). The SS approaches are widely used in humanitarian emergencies as states of active mechanism in child protection. The forms of SS could be abstractly or physically existing, formal or informal, institutionalized or non-institutionalized to present environment leveled with confidence from forms of harm (Ager et al. 2013).

In practice SS is contextualized in two parts: truth in knowledge as shared about violations of rights of children and the social, political and ethical parts of 'infrastructural' practical actions centered on protecting children in conflict (Anderson, 2021). The validity of knowledge generated could be through self-reporting or narration, performed arts (songs, media, print, plays) and information from caregivers, parents, child advocates and monitoring and reporting mechanism by agencies. The infrastructural actions include investments and scaled-up activities that help children recover from physical and psychological wounds of war (Save the Children, 2019). The interventions are forms of advocacy, mediations, negotiations, family tracing, reunification, demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration approaches and temporary institutionalization of victims for healing. The two parts complement needs of both individual and institutional child protection-centered actions localized in a conflict (Anderson, 2021).

SS supports resilience as part of well-being of children from gruesome experiences through community based organized and supported activities (Child Protection Working Group, 2012); Ager et al. 2013). As an intervention strategy, activities framed focus on risks protection mechanism, enhanced psychosocial support and mobilization of all stakeholders' involvement for strengthened localized community mechanisms as deliberate actions for child protection (Ager et al. 2013). The SS are responsive to the changing nature of conflict and capacities are that last after the conflict are built. SS as a rights-based approach and child-centered programming alleviates the risks of armed conflicts on children. The risks faced are grave violations of their rights: killing and maiming, recruitment and use as child soldiers, rape and sexual violence, attacks on critical institutions, abduction and denial of humanitarian access including detention, displacement and destruction of health systems (Wambugu & Adem, 2008; Alexander, Boothby & Wessells, 2008; Save the Children, 2019; Twaibu, 2015). These have lifelong effects on physical, social, cultural, mental and moral development of children. Actors in armed conflict fail to uphold the law, norms and standards that exist internationally and locally for child protection and physical safety (Save the Children, 2021).

Safe spaces (SS) are established as a bold mechanism to protect children, (Alastair Ager,Janna Metzler,Marisa Vojta and Kevin Savage, 2013). The SS approaches are widely used in humanitarian emergencies as states of active mechanism in child protection.

Children suffer acts of impunity as targets and victims of these atrocities when strategies adopted in armed conflicts bring the battle to civilians destroying child protection support systems (UNICEF, 2009).

In theory SS initiates a sense of safety and in practice a structure and continuity for children development amidst overwhelming experiences of degrading effects of armed conflict around them (World Vision International and IFRC-Reference Centre for Psychological Support [IFRC-RCPS], 2018). The efforts to strengthen child protection are rooted in Institutions and individuals such as inter-institutional actions in safeguarding the rights, established frameworks of interventions and leveraging on adaptive capacities and scaled-up activities significant to end grave violations of rights of children and reintegration.

SS play a vital role mobilizing all stakeholders for strengthened community-based child protection mechanism in conflict zones. The components are raising awareness and advocacy, formation of child protection committees, develop referrals pathways system for children and families in need of extra protection

SS secures the psychosocial support mechanisms of children from conflict within existing local support structures. Many Victims of armed conflicts replicate violence or manifest negative effects (Alexander et al., 2008; Santino, Regilme & Spoldi, 2021; Save the Children, 2008, World Bank, 2016). Local institutional entities and individuals present themselves as spheres of interactions and thenceforth resilience. Families, extended family, communities, schools, teachers, elected persons, health care, legal, social services, women and youth groups are existing community structures and capacities that are vital in developing resilience (Alexander et al., 2008). SS supports families and communities to strengthen mechanism for reversal of deep-seated, long term physical and psychological effects of armed conflict on children. Investing and helping children recover from physical and psychological wounds of war is paramount (Save the Children 2019). Children in armed conflicts require innovative approaches to access physical, psychological, cultural and socio-political support systems for sustained positive development.

Lastly, Safe Spaces play a vital role in mobilizing all stakeholders for strengthened community-based child protection mechanisms in conflict zones. The components are raising awareness and advocacy, formation of child protection committees, developing a referral pathways system for children and families in need of extra protection (family tracing, reunion) and helping them know their rights (World Vision International and IFRC-RCPS, 2018). SS may develop a multidisciplinary, multispectral approach and many partnerships with stakeholders locally and internationally. This occurs within a protective system of children anchored on laws, policies, regulations and services across all social sectors with increasing action from stakeholders (UNICEF, 2009).

Sustainable Safe Spaces are a localized, people-centred approach, with individuals and institutions as local actors, resilience-oriented, multileveled, building on existing supports, strengthening the evidence base and management of the unintended (Wessell, 2017). The depth and breadth with which SS is established are hinged on practical investments, scaled up to provide direct protection of children and localized as implemented (Save the Children, 2019). In summary, SS can be a complex social intervention meant to address a variety of difficult, individual, group and local system problems characterized by many moving parts when implementing and realizing changes (Crumpton, 2020). A viable institution-individual link in SS design advances the social sustainability dimension that recognizes and claims the significance of the formed relationship between children, families, communities and societies and the transitional activities for children from conflict situations.

METHODOLOGY

The paper reviewed secondary literature focusing on use of safe spaces or their equivalent within the armed conflicts zones in Africa as documented by various agents. Documents inclusion criteria for the review were: 1) the publication referenced to be for the region that have had conflicts such as Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Sudan and Nigeria; 2) the publications within the last 15 years and; 3) published sources such as reports. The relevant literature was identified by searching the bibliographic sources online related to safe spaces or its synonym child-friendly spaces.

A total of five documents were included. The theory of change was that institutional and individual-linked adaptive capacities were vital in protection of children from risks, provision of psychosocial support, mobilization of communities and stakeholder for resources required in the interventions or intent of building safe spaces for children in active conflict zones in Africa.

FINDINGS

The review found that in East Africa, the long-running armed conflict by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda and the Great Lakes region of Africa had pulled in many children and youths as soldiers and non–combatants as targets and victims (Twaibu, 2015; Blattman & Lundberg, 2007). Northern Nigeria and neighbouring countries endured violations by Boko Haram. Children were recruited and used in conflict and more than 1,385 were abducted (UN, 2020). In Somalia, the Somali National Army and al Shabaab have deployed children in armed conflicts (Santino et al., 2021). A women and girls safe space (WGSS) framework implemented in DRC, Uganda and Kenya had five related but distinct objectives spanning multiple domains of wellbeing, enhanced coordination across multiple sectors and adaptable in any context (Stark et al., 2021).

A multi-country safe space intervention 'Creating, Opportunities through Mentorship, Parental involvement and Safe Space (COMPASS) framework undertaken in Ethiopia and DRC to evaluate the impact of intervention on adolescent girls' psychological well-being and exposure to violence was designed with similar activities components and reported significant improvement in outcomes along the articulated theory of change (Stark et al., 2021). Other examples of SS projects that leveraged program specific theories for change to organize and define program plans and aligning them with outcomes included COMPASS program in Ethiopia and multipronged program in Rwanda by Action Aid on Violence Against Women and Girls ([VAWG], Stark et al., 2021).

In a report on community-based reintegration program for children released from armed forces and groups in low-income communities characterized by minimal basic services in the violence-prone Boma State of south Sudan, UNICEF used a holistic and integrated approach whose components were an interim care centre for family tracing and reunification; access to quality education; provision of essential skills and pathways to livelihoods; poverty reduction strategies; mental health and psychosocial support services; peacekeeping activities and case management with various local and national authorities and informal opinion leaders (Sevenants, 2019). In DRC the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) intervened at a community level by sensitizing communities and armed actors on the adverse effects of child recruitment into armed forces and groups (ICRC, 2021).

In an internally displaced persons camp in in Goma in DRC, violence and abductions were critical protection concerns for children and the caregivers. SS was a means to promote community–based child protection and its sustainability depended on volunteers support and continuity of funding (World Vision, 2015). In Ramwanja settlement scheme in Uganda hosting Rwandan refugees, SS was utilized by young children with the care givers reporting a greater sense of protection and heightened awareness of support structure for children protection and bolstering resources and assets supportive of children development (World Vision, 2015). In the Niger Delta, UNICEF reported that a militia group in Maiduguri in north-east Nigeria had released 900 children as part of commitments to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children (UNICEF, 2019).

In a report on child-friendly schools, CFS as a form of SS initiative in Nigeria by the UNICEF showed that it was based on the principle of child-centeredness, democratic participation and inclusiveness designed as a pathway towards quality education (UNICEF,

In Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC intervened at a community level by sensitizing communities and armed actors on the adverse effects of child recruitment into armed forces and groups, (International Committee Of the Red Cross, ICRC, 2021).

2009). In Somalia in 2012, the Transitional Federal Government signed an action plan with the support of United Nations Political Office for Somalia aimed at ending recruitment and use of children in the Somali National Army, reintegration of the released children, criminalizing the practice and grant the UN access to verify absence of minors in armed forces (Santino et al., 2021). In Uganda, ICRC in its program for reintegration of children in conflict into families, schools, communities and labor markets, reduced their vulnerability, prevented recruitment to armed groups, broke social isolation, targeted psychosocial support, skill acquisition through vocational training and income-generating activities (ICRC, 2021). Former child soldiers in Uganda were enrolled in a progressive reintegration process. In temporary reception centers, they received medical attention and family tracing and livelihood support (Twaibu, 2015). It was reported in DRC about the ex-combatants and rescued youth that rejoined the militia and armed groups (World Vision, 2015).

In Ramwanja settlement scheme in Uganda hosting Rwandan refugees, SS was well utilized by young children with the care givers reporting a greater sense of protection and heightened awareness of support structure for children protection and bolstering resources and assets supportive of children development, (World Vision, 2015).

In Nigeria, child soldiers were used both by the government and militia groups (UN, 2020). Somalia had child soldiers fighting with government forces and al Shabab (Santino et al., 2021). In Uganda, reintegration process faced the challenge of children rejoining the militia groups, fighting alongside government forces. Others were tortured, confined or held for a long time, coupled with issues of family tracing, reunification or proper registration of children from conflict (Twaibu, 2015). International civil society organisations, local institutions, community- and faith-based organisations with the relevant child protection had children from conflict participate in community-based relief, recovery and reconstruction programs by use of vocational and skills training that augmented their income, increased sense of identity and self-worth in ways that enhanced healing and building of resilience (UNICEF, 2009). It was noted that SSs were avenues for dialogue among children, young people, parents, teachers, military personnel, caregivers, private sector, civil societies, government and which enhanced their participation in their own protection in homes, schools and communities (UNICEF, 2018).

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DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Institutions and individuals use theories of change (TOCs) in designing SS. Institutions and individuals are change agents that establish environments of trust, protection, mutual regard and nurture practice of co-operation and joint problem solving, (Edwards, 1992).The theories of change developed are defined or anchored within treaties, policies and laws enacted by various governments. The TOCs could be guided or depended on the discipline or sector to address the specific needs. The TOCs as used are different for each of the country. There is need to have a common approach to design SS. Megevand and Marchesini (2019) suggest that for a robust WGSS program a comprehensive theory of change was paramount. The International Red Cross and International Medical Corporation prepared and provided a template to organisations to guide design of SS activities and approaches (Stark et al., 2021). The three main objectives of TOCs are reduce the risks that predispose the children to grave violation, provide psychosocial support and mobilize all stakeholders to participate in the wellbeing of children from the conflict.

The TOCs that guide design SS should respond to individual, community and local institution needs associated with recognizing and responding (scaling) to risk prevention mechanism for children in conflict. The implementation process entails developing capacities among paralegals, male mentors, female mentors, and volunteers, local institutions such as families, faith-based groups, youth groups, women groups, and child and community networks. These groups, the children from conflict, other service providers and authorities can create opportunities to acquire knowledge relevant to build individual and group capacities to make attitudinal, behavioral, community and local system changes necessary in risk prevention mechanism.

The programmatic activities in SS allow for greater collaboration, multi-sector approach, interagency, interdisciplinary coordination and communication between communities, children and institutional stakeholders. The local institutions and individuals face challenges of inadequate capacities the reason for collaboration through capacity building that may include: rights of children, financial resource management, legal issues, research and development, monitoring and reporting mechanism and demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Wessell (2017) posits that a successful SS should be characterized by its comprehensiveness, sustainability and 'do harm principle' (Wessell, 2017).

The emergent boundaries: institutions or individuals, emerging roles and their immediate spatial action for child protection build safe spaces: achieve long-term stability, security and prosperity of the children from conflict. The institutions include women networks, youth networks, caregivers, education and health institutions, faith-based groupings, community-linked networks and associated leadership created for a social wellbeing. The individuals may include teachers, volunteers, professional mentors, caregivers, faith-based leaders, researchers and child experts. Governments, the UN, non-governmental organisations, civil societies and the mentioned local institutions champion child protection. The efforts by these institutions include legislations, policy action, advocacy, upholding justice and standards for restitution. Regionally, there is the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA, as an institution established by the African union and mandated to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in Africa under the Peace and Security Council targets protection, preservation of life and property and the wellbeing of the African people, and the Africa Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC, 2016). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

(ACRWC) and other international instruments such as the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols compel governments to protect children during armed conflict. Targeting children for genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity are profound and violations of international law (ACERWC, 2016).

For example, the Geneva Convention and Additional Protocols are the core of international humanitarian law which regulates conduct in armed conflict safeguarding the principles of distinction and proportionality and having a special protection of children by providing education, basic needs and the involvement of the humanitarian organisation that reach the affected people (Save the Children, 2019). It sets a safe space as an object of humanitarian intervention transitioning through vital phases championing end of grave violations against children to reintegration. The UN Convention of the Rights of a Child defines a child as "a person under 18 years". It recognizes and protects their indivisible social, civil, political, economic, health and cultural rights. Individual states are therefore urged to protect and care for children affected by armed conflict with the Optional Protocol promoting the principle of non-recruitment and non-participation of children in armed conflict (Save the Children, 2019).

In theory and practice, the systems of responses components toolbox for support are drawn from every sector. Included are all issues in caring and protecting conflict affected children. But as practiced at local level, it was organic and innately within the population in flight or displaced, striving to re-connect to the previous societal state of security and safety. The emergent institutions and individuals and emerging transitioning roles form the adaptive capacities for children, families and the communities to rebuild themselves. The adaptive capacities or efforts to strengthen child protection are weaved in policies, treaties, peace accords and military actions meant to stop recruitment of children, use of children as combatants, release of abductee and effort to stop child trafficking. Local and international institutions establish funding mechanism for targeted child protection missions, enhanced technical support in areas such as negotiations, formulations of peace treaties ,reconciliation and accords, pursuit of justice for victims, training of local groupings on the established standards, a structure of conflict management skills or mechanism geared at ending grave violation against children and effective management resources through various monitoring and evaluation structures. The success and greater residual forms of adaptive capacities for the displaced communities are dependent on enhanced collaboration between institutions, political leaders, training, funding mechanism, technical assistance, regrouping and volunteering.

Local leaders, emergent local institutions, networks and community structures wear the face of children and speak for children peace negotiations, agreement, mediation, local justice and restitution approaches between parties and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs (DDR) in addressing grave violations against children. An approach such the DDR of ex-combatants children in South Sudan and DRC depended on the comprehensiveness of the theory of change and its convergence to the local context (change agents, children from conflict). The DDR as implemented was suited for a fragile state that had suffered conflict, corruption and lacked adaptive capacity(severe unemployment, security, financial limits) and it targeted rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants in south Sudan (Sevenants, 2019).The same factors that favored use of DDR approach Sudan seem to influence recidivism and cause for violence renewal in DRC (Martinez et al., 2017).

This was attributed to the weakness in institution-individual activity linkage for enhanced reintegration. When peacekeepers are deployed, they advanced the political dimension and that of child protection; the child protection advisers implement systematic monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children, dialoguing with parties, conduct advocacy in political sensitive issues and that all civilians, military personnel, and police have received training that promote and protect children rights (UNICEF, 2009). Local agencies and government institutions religious institutions, colleges and universities, NGOs, civil groups, community-based organisation, informal leaders with the technical support and collaboration with international organisations have involved children associated with armed forces in research, monitoring and evaluation of the success of the SS interventions.

Other activities which benefit children affected by armed conflict include nationwide campaigns against the war, campaigns against countries sending weapons, call to attention applicable of law, instruction on humanitarian values and life skills activities targeting children, initiatives addressing the psychosocial needs of the hurt and injured, raped, suffered trauma as victims or witnesses, social reintegration program for children released from armed groups. Local universities engagement to build local capacities not only for site training but also including child protection in their curriculum. Local institutions have better access to and understanding of the local environment such as culture, language and 'political system' compared to the international ones hence play a vital role in delivering services, monitoring and advocating for child protection. On the contrary was the case in Nigeria where several armed groups emerged to champion the concerns and protection of their communities from the acts of Boko Haram and instead ills were meted on local and sustained levels of insecurity.

Local civil societies form lasting impact of advocacy and create levels of democratic space that influence articulation of pertinent issues and choice of local leadership. At other times, such local leadership become institutions that fail to safeguard the values and aspirations of the locals. Many religious societies working in harmony are springs of resilience and community strength even as they take part in peace building and reconciliation mechanism beyond the conflict. The external local agencies such as the media, child protection networks and private sector through flow of relevant and vital information, play the role of raising awareness, advocacy, co-ordination and mobilization of the various actors in child protection. Local banks can be involved through supporting cash transfers mechanism working with mobile service providers. The institutional mechanism for participation should be adaptive and within global standards and guidelines and suited to the local context, promoting organisation culture and building the capacities of the caregivers. An example could be the telecommunication service providers that can zone and lower their rates of communication to help the displaced communities trace their relatives.

The theory and practice of Reintegration of children was meant to reduce vulnerability of former child soldiers when they are reintroduced into families, schools and communities or labour market. The feeling of safety by ex-combatants, abductees or teen mothers and their children would be when accepted by the family, schools and community. In a results-oriented multilevel approach flow of relevant information to or from national level to the very remote local place would be vital for action. These would be important in cases such as family tracing, registration of children born with abductees and any other referral cases for management. When the actors are multi-disciplined and activities resilience oriented then the specific needs of the children from conflict are addressed. To ensure success, the interventions are adapted to local context, building of existing support such as families, schools, health facilities, local NGOs (partnerships) and strengthening the evidence base of what worked. Generally, the activities targeted include psychosocial support, vocational training, income generating activities and recreational activities. The social sustainability of the intervention demands that every work done by change agents should not hurt or harm the beneficiaries. It was noted that children from conflicts in Uganda, DRC, Sudan and Nigeria were punished while others detained for long, this hindered healing. In other instances, children were used as combatants in complete disregard of the international laws by both the government and militia groups. Government agencies were involved in atrocities against children such as rape, maiming them in the process of information gathering.

In summary, SS theory has components such as education, health services, psycho-social support, vocational or skill training, reintegration and livelihoods programs targeting children affected by armed conflict and their communities as a wider process of building the adaptive capacities enhancing resilience of individuals and the community inner and external resources. Children participation was right and a means to secure other rights for survival, protection and development. Volunteers, trained caregivers, traditional chiefs, female elders, elected community leaders and religious leaders are link for both children from conflict and institutions for change. There was need to secure training of care givers, female mentor led girl groups, camp leaders, parents, groups and communities on issues of child protection and establish standards of operation at local level. That local institutions and individuals link at securing risk protection mechanism, psychosocial support mechanism and mobilization of relevant stakeholders for child protection.

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10 CHAPTER

CHILDREN IN PEACE BUILDING AND VIOLENCE DURING POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN A KENYAN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Despite increasing attention to a wide range of actors in conflict in the scholarly literature, the roles and experiences of children have been largely considered only in terms of their victimhood. Similarly, in global policy discourses, children and youth are predominantly understood in relation to their vulnerability and the protection of their rights, or alternatively as a threat to security (as is notable in ideas around the so-called youth bulge and violence). In this paper, we contribute to the emerging literature within peacebuilding that considers children both as actors in conflict and as potential agents of change. In particular, we link these arguments to debates about individual and community resilience in settings of regularised or long-term violence and how children navigate through challenging relationships.

Drawing on recent semi-structured interviews with community members who were classified as children during the events and older CBO youth leaders in Kibera, Nairobi, we examine perceptions and understandings of children's involvement in peacebuilding and in violence during the contested elections of 2017 in Kenya. Our findings highlight how children connect with interethnic resentments and aggressive behaviour or develop higher levels of agency, in terms of overcoming such social learning and of peacebuilding activities. How children behave during the period of election tensions is being shaped by differing relationships and experiences, which are interwoven within ethnic, gender and place identifications. The paper concludes with considerations of children within peacebuilding and violent processes in the forthcoming 2022 elections.

'Youthing' peacebuilding

Despite increasing attention to a wide range of peacebuilding actors in the scholarly literature, the roles and experiences of children have been largely considered only in terms of their victimhood. This is mirrored, in global policy discourses about children and youth, by a focus on vulnerability and the need for protection from aggressive behaviour (McEvoy-Levy 2011). In line with this perspective, young people are often rendered passive in discussions of violence that affects them and of possible solutions towards peace (Berents 2015, Dixon 2012, Podder 2015).

The binary opposite to this vulnerability lens is a vision of young people as dangerous and a threat to security (McEvoy-Levy 2011, Podder 2015). Within academic work and subsequently in global policy, this has been expressed in the idea of the so-called 'youth bulge', which links fast growing youth populations with pressures on infrastructure, education and jobs and concomitant political instability and violence. Since the inception of the term, youth bulge studies in a wide range of contexts have demonstrated that such demographics, while not making revolution or rebellion inevitable, increase the risk of political instability under certain conditions, particularly where there is economic decline or stagnation (Kimari, Melchiorre, and Rasmussen 2020). Moreover, in the particular context of post-conflict societies or those experiencing chronic political violence, young people represent significant conflict legacies, for example in terms of health and mental health, education and economic development (Podder 2015).

It is important to appreciate that young people's experiences of conflict and their potential roles in peacebuilding are more complex than suggested by the above positions. Recognising the agency of youth (see for example Jeffrey 2012), but rejecting the victim-perpetrator binary, in this paper we adapt the youth-inclusive framework for theorising peacebuilding developed by Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) to incorporate children. This theoretical framework is based on three spheres of youth enquiry that we extend to include children:

- how peacebuilding is 'youthed', that is to say, socially constructed around age-based divisions, interests and ideologies
- how peace is narrated by or through youth
- how local and global power structures enable or hinder everyday youth peace building practices.

Berents and McEvoy-Levy's (2015) framework is grounded in recent arguments around the so-called 'local turn in peacebuilding' and, more specifically, debates about everyday peace. This literature posits that peacebuilding often involves externally designed and elite driven interventions in national peace processes that exclude the voices of marginal and subaltern groups. Over the past decade or so, critical peacebuilding scholars have begun to question this so-called 'liberal peace' paradigm, recognising that sustainable peace needs to include the agency of local and communal actors and involves bottom-up and everyday processes (MacGinty 2014, MacGinty and Richmond 2013, Brewer et al 2018).

While this literature has demonstrated that free markets and good governance, among others, are inherent to a universalising western liberal model of peacebuilding, the values of protectionism and adultism are just as essential to the liberal peace, but far less frequently critiqued. Dixon (2012: 5) draws attention to the significance of such discourses to peacebuilding:

> *Liberal childhood is defined by protection, vulnerability, and subordination to adults. It constructs a narrative of a childhood that presents young people as 'not fully formed yet' in relation to adults and as such can be used to justify the imposition of external, 'expert-led' interventionism in liberal peace where young people are involved.*

These discursive framings matter, firstly, because they obscure the socially and culturally contingent definitions of children and adults and the complex experiences of young people that are affected by conflict and violence. Secondly, they shape whose knowledges are seen as legitimate in peace processes

(Dixon 2012). Finally, as highlighted by recent literature on the child in global politics in the field of international relations, children and childhood are used for political and military purposes as an 'emotional sphere against which to normalise and legitimise violence' (Brocklehurst, cited in McEvoy-Levy 2011: 162). Consequently, when children are discovered to be fighting within conflicts their actions are considered to stem from coercion with little or no agency (Klaus 2020). Children's passivity often tends to be interwoven with women's experiences inside paternalist narrative. This is noticeable in Kenyan examples such as when the Kenyan President Moi claimed in 1991 that his opponents intended to destabilize the country and 'women and children would suffer the most in the event of chaos' (cited in Haugerud 1997: 27). The victimhood of children is also noticeable throughout key stages in Kenyan development. During the struggle for independence children were killed during attacks by Mau Mau on families of perceived collaborators and in attacks on Mau Mau groups which, wa Kinyatti (2010) claims, included sexually assaulting girls and boys. Children were also held in special British detention centres for those suspected of taking the Mau Mau oath (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966).

Alongside these events, reports can be discovered of children becoming more proactively engaged. For instance, Mau Mau organised political sessions at schools, advising on discipline, commitment and sacrifice and High School children took the anti-colonialist oath. Children aged between 12 and 17 have been claimed to have 'participated in great numbers in every aspect of the armed struggle' (wa Kinyatti 2010: 140). The involvement of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old boys in rebel groups and other participants who were described elsewhere as being largely aged 16 to 30 are also recorded in Anderson (2006). There is further documented evidence concerning the involvement of those who today would be considered children. Wa Kinyatti (2010: 216) refers to a letter, addressed to the leader Dedan Kimathi, from a 17-year-old girl who had joined the armed struggle in order to avoid a marriage to an 'enemy of my country'. Some of the under 18-year-old

children appear to have aroused attention principally because, after being caught for alleged activism, they were imprisoned rather than executed. The reasoning provided for the lesser penalty has been that the perpetrators were aged less than 18 years old. For example, the male leader of an attack on three young women, who were considered collaborators, was aged 17 as was a male who participated in an attack on the colonial forces (Anderson 2006). In a separate case, a female fighter was reported to have been imprisoned rather than being executed, like her caught comrades, because she was under the age of 18. Younger children were also reported such as a 12-year-old girl who stood trial alongside four older males for having brought food to their hideout (Anderson 2006). Other accounts fit the victim narrative, such as a sixteen-year-old female student who describes being abducted by Mau Mau (Anderson 2006). Therefore, historical evidence of involvement of children in violence within Kenyan politics exists. Since the independence struggle, such details of children's participation in past or present peacebuilding or in violence are lacking. Locating children in recent peacebuilding processes and violent activities becomes the central challenge to this paper.

A bottom-up and everyday perspective might be particularly useful in analysing young people's, including children's, encounters with violence and their roles in peacebuilding because, while structurally marginalised and often unable to affect broad change, 'their experiences of insecurity, violence and risk are mediated by their ability to affect small changes in their everyday lives' (Berents 2015: 195). Mainstream discourses of children and peace are unlikely to address questions of young people's own agency and their (everyday) contributions to peace. Conversely, recent research from a range of conflict/ post-conflict contexts demonstrates the active and critical involvement of youth, if not children, in peacebuilding activities.The research also draws attention to oppressive nature of power structures in which young people are situated in conflict and beyond and that hinder their actions (see for example the Special Issue in Peacebuilding 2015, Vol. 3, No. 2). Such analysis should not exclude the agency of youth. For instance, Turner's (2015) study of everyday politics of peace in a rural traditional community in South Africa examines the ways in which youth activists have sought to tackle multiple forms of violence, both structural and direct, to empower community residents and to promote justice. Similarly, Berents' (2015) research with conflict-affected young people in a peri-urban barrio community near Bogota, Colombia, develops the concept of embodied everyday peace, which she understands as securing practices of everyday resilience in the context of ongoing violence. Such practices serve to minimise risk and provide mutual support for young people and they constitute 'meaningful actions towards bodily security and community endeavours for peace' (Berents 2015: 196).

In the aftermath of conflict young people are often a driver of regime change but do not necessarily have adequate opportunities to fully participate in politics. Research on youth political citizenship in Guatemala and Timor-Leste distinguishes three factors that influence specific patterns of youth participation in democratic systems, encompassing civic and political engagement: context, control and challenge (Kurtenbach and Pawelz 2015). Context refers to the different issues in which youth are participating politically or in a civic capacity, for example community service, environmentalism, cultural activities, sports or human rights. Control is the extent to which youth activity is controlled or guided by adults, such as youth wings of political parties, labour unions or religious groups. Such organisations are typically very hierarchical and aim to integrate youths into existing forms of participation, as Kurtenbach and Pawelz (2015) note. Challenge refers to ways in which horizontal, autonomous, self-organised youth groups question and contest the structures and age-based hierarchies of adult organisations. Although challenge does incorporate autonomous youth organisations, the overall framework adopted is more formalised than the community peace groups operating in Kibera. Consequently, in our adaption, outlined below, we

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extend the factors to incorporate more informal, looser and spontaneous groupings across community and children's activities.

This brief summary of recent studies on youth in peacebuilding reflects the focus of the local turn literature on the power and legitimacy of younger people directly affected by conflict and violence. It is problematic to employ an uncritical or simple notion of 'the local', however: it can be conflated with professional civil society or liberal NGOs (Paffenholz 2010), and it can be romanticising resistance against 'liberal' international actors while underplaying the power of local and national elites (Paffenholz 2015). When 'the local' is seen as automatically more empowering, there is a danger that issues of power are neglected, not only in relation to age dynamics but also to gender dynamics or politics. Youth peacebuilding programs can potentially challenge existing norms around achieving gender equity in participation and perhaps improve options for building peace (Pruitt 2015). However, girls remain a typically more excluded group from peace processes and formal political participation, with youth programmes often male-dominated, while women's organisations are usually led by and aimed at older females (Sommers, cited in Pruitt 2015). It has also been shown, in research on peacebuilding projects in Australia and Northern Ireland, that girls' actual contributions to peacebuilding tend to be overlooked and that they might find greater barriers to recognition and participation in youth-led social movements, such as sexism, exclusion and attempts to '"fix" girls by teaching them to engage with boys on their terms' (Pruitt 2013: 59). Research on participation in more general community youth activities demonstrates that activities, though aimed at all, eventually become appropriated and dominated by boys (Baker and Cohen, cited in Pruitt 2015). Pruitt's (2015: 169) study of youth peacebuilding initiatives in Colombia, is unusual in that their leaders were mostly girls, finding that gender norms place limitations on participation in peacebuilding, but that programmes can be adapted in sensitive, reflexive and culturally relevant ways to become more inclusive by 'developing an everyday, gender-inclusive hospitality'.

A further relevant consideration in the literature on youth in contexts of conflict and violence is around resilience. It is well documented that exposure to war, adversity or trauma has adverse direct effects on young children and young people, including physical and mental health impacts. Childhood trauma associated with war disrupts young people's senses of safety and self-worth and increases levels of shame, emotional stress and propensity to engage in destructive behaviours (Atkinson et al., in Massad et al. 2018). However, trauma exposure does not necessarily have such outcomes, and resilience frameworks can be used to identify what makes children who grow up with long term political violence resilient and have healthy psycho-social functioning. Importantly, a distinction can be made between 'passive resilience', focusing on recovery and reconstruction, and 'transformational resilience', which adds value by addressing underlying risks and vulnerabilities. Massad et al (2018) examine the United Nations Community Mental Health Project in the West Bank, Palestine, that transitioned from using a medical model (implying that pathological effects of war can be 'cured' via the individual treatment of a child) to a psycho-social one (where children have the capacity to adapt or bounce back despite threatening circumstances). This resilience model was seen as helpful, especially when actors were open to mobilising social and community capital that already exists in Palestine, essentially leveraging community resilience (ibid: 288).

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Youth mobilisation in Kenya

Turning now to the specific context of Kenya, the country is an example of the demographic trends described earlier: 70% of the population is below 30 years of age and those aged between 15 and 24 account for 20.3% of the population (Kimari, Melchiorre, and Rasmussen 2020). The age classification of young people and children

varies across countries and international organisations with boundaries shifting. In Kenya, childhood reaches 18 years of age. Wamucii and Idwasi (2011) describe the differences that exist within the same age group according to gender, ethnicity, education and socio-economics. Moreover, there are physical ambiguities concerning the size and physique of older children and youths which has been highlighted in our 2022 fieldwork and is explained below. In the interviews, a male youth leader highlights these difficulties when physically identifying the ages of people participating in demonstrations. The tendency is to assume the demonstrators are youth. However, 'you can find someone who's 14, but he has a big body. You think he's a grown up but still young'.

Ambiguities are compounded by disruptions to previous rites of passage and accompanying roles and responsibilities (ibid). Moreover, the extension of schooling and delayed economic independence creates different expectations for these students compared with children who leave school early and are expected to enter the informal economy to help support families. The early school leavers are adopting adult responsibilities which are most noticeable, as Wamucci and Idwasi (2011) explain, for children living on the streets or during times of war and, we add, electoral conflict.

Conversely, residents of Kibera characterise many of these older boys and young men both as 'idlers' and 'idleness' and as one of the main drivers of electoral violence. This perception of young men as dangerous, although not necessarily accurate, is 'an often-heard repertoire in Kenya when it comes to explaining political violence and other social ills' (Van Stapele 2016: 309). For example, there had been a raft of short-lived programmes targeting unemployed youth in the wake of the 2007/08 post-election crisis, evidencing this very argument of young unemployed men as perpetrators of political violence (Lynch 2018). Contrary to people's widely held perceptions around 'idleness', young men in Kibera often spend long days out on the streets looking for work. They make themselves available wherever economic opportunities arise, as a growing literature on 'hustling', economic uncertainties and survival in Nairobi's informal settlements demonstrates (Thieme 2016, Thieme 2018, Van Stapele 2021). Rather, this scholarship argues, the 'hustle' can be understood as an expression of the struggles and agency of urban youth in Kenya (and elsewhere in sub Saharan Africa) and their practices of belonging, resistance and hope (Thieme, Ference and van Stapele 2021).

In Kenya, young people have been increasingly marginalised in the multi-party era (Kagwanja 2005) and generational tensions have existed since independence. For example, Kagwanja (2005: 53) details the rise of the Mungiki movement as a 'tragic story of the powerlessness of Africa's young people' and its descent into violence, as an example of generational struggles over power and youth identity.

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part of student movements, human rights-based grassroots organizations, or vigilante groups and criminal gangs' (Kimari, Melchiorre and Rasmussen 2020: 695). This ties into the above-mentioned global discourse around the menace of the youth bulge and local and global securitisation (ibid., also see King et al. 2020). As a result, the narrative of power-hungry politicians outsourcing violence beyond state agencies to marginalised poor youth is obscuring how

Many youths appear to have emphasised their agency through being selective in their actions and deciding whom to attack, loot, force away, charge protection money or to leave alone (de Smedt 2009). There were also reports about how youth performed for the media, hanging around in groups until the Press appeared and they resumed their aggressive shouting and burning tyres.

'state-sanctioned neo-patrimonial logics reproduce youth politics as radical' (Rasmussen and van Stapele 2020: 724). Rasmussen and Van Stapele's (2020) ethnographic work in two informal settlements in Nairobi demonstrates that youth politics in these locations is more heterogenous and agentic. Focusing on political mobilisation around the 2017 elections, complex dynamics of participation, redistribution and recognition are discussed in terms of Kupona ('recovery' or 'healing' in Kiswahili). Used by young people in the study to highlight their marginalisation ('being sick or unwell') in relation both to Kenyan politics and the state, youth groups used the term to reflect on their role of agents or security providers for local politicians as well as their wish for inclusion, recognition and re-distribution.

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Kibera during violent election times

Fieldwork for this study was carried out in Kibera, approximately three kilometres from the centre of Nairobi, which is Kenya's, and one of Africa's, largest informal settlements. Population estimates range from 177,000 according to the Kenya Population and Census Report and 2.6 million according to some local residents (Barosa 2011). Kibera was one of the places where conflict that followed the contested 2007 Presidential elections was particularly damaging with many lives lost, people displaced and properties and businesses destroyed (Barasa 2011, de Smedt 2009). For Barosa (2011: 43), examples in Kibera showed, Kenya was 'reaping the fruits of ignoring its youth' in particular their unemployment, poverty and economic marginalisation which 'makes them susceptible to recruitment into gangs that are often used in political and electoral disputes' (Ndung'u and Wepundi 2012: 7). When applying the youth's involvement to Kurtenbach and Pawelz' (2015) factors that influence participation, it is apparent that some challenging activities were beyond adult control. Activities such as attending rallies, disrupting rival events and confronting opposition groups are often under the control of political leaders (de Smedt 2009). Nevertheless, although youths were encouraged to disrupt and be mobilised in opposition to either the election result, retaliation or in defence of the outcome, these actions appear to have extended beyond the control of the politicians.

Intersecting with age distinctions are notions of masculinity and femininity that have informed gender behaviours and attitudes in many places in Kenya, including Kibera, during times of conflict (Kihato 2015). Sexual violence is, for both security forces and ethnic gangs, a fundamental part of targeting a particular community (Robins 2011). For instance, in addition to looting, displacement and attacks on rival ethnic groups, there were widespread reports of women and girls being raped (de Smedt 2009). While a far larger proportion of victims of postelection sexual violence have been female, forced circumcision and male castration were reported during the periods of electoral violence, with Luo

men who are from an uncircumcised ethnic group being particularly targeted (Krause 2020). Mungiki were reported to have subjected rival males to forcible circumcision and genitalia mutilation (Barosa 2011). And by circumcision or mutilation, the male victims and their ethnicity were feminized. Attacks of this nature connected into the ethnic beliefs of the attacking Kikuyus that the uncircumcised Luos were 'boys' irrespective of their age as witnessed by some of the references to the then 62-year-old Presidential challenger and Luo Raila Odinga (Kihato 2015). These actions challenge the dominant societal and community perceptions of gender roles more generally and victims of post-election violence specifically. Stereotypical challenges can also be found in the roles of women who are either invisible in reports or perform gender related roles. Kihato (2015) identifies how women were actively involved in different ways during the conflict ranging from more expected support roles such as feeding the fighting men to spying, identifying 'enemy' homes to target and attacking opponents. It has also been common for women to publicly shame men who are reluctant to fight (ibid.) thus encouraging men to perform hegemonic masculinities.

Study Design

The fieldwork built upon a 2018 project into peace building during the 2017 elections in Kibera (Gibson et al. 2021, Vertigans et al. forthcoming). The 2018 fieldwork was carried out in different phases based around the qualitative methods of photovoice, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Through such methods nineteen participants were enabled to share their experiences initially through capturing photographs and then through semi structured interviews in the words of 30 participants. A third phase incorporated 11 additional in-depth interviews with women in Kibera with greater focus on how they had experienced the period of electoral tensions. Key findings included the significance of messages of peace, place attachment to Kibera, the reinforcement of the past, peace in the everyday and the interweaving nature of relationships and activities in peacebuilding.

In the 2018 participants' accounts, aside from the need to be protected, children did not feature within experiences of either violence or peacebuilding. The 2022 research was more directive in the questioning to consider whether the youth inclusive framework can also incorporate children in peacebuilding. Conversely, we also wanted to explore the involvement of children in violent protests to better understand the range of experiences and to determine whether the peacebuilding and conflict literature needed to be more cognisant of the proactive roles of children.

Our 2022 fieldwork into reflections about the experiences of children, their anxieties, involvement in peacebuilding and engagement in violence was carried out in January, during a visit to Nairobi, and early February 2022. Six female and ten male participants were interviewed, using semi structured questioning. The 16 were also divided into two categories: 'child' at the time of the 2017 elections and youth leader. Six 'children' and ten youth leaders were interviewed. The 'children' consisted of four girls and two boys, while the youth leaders were two females and eight males. Participants had been living in four of the 13 villages in Kibera at the time of the elections: Laini Saba, Olympic, Silanga and Soweto. Two of the youth leaders had previously lived in Katwekera. Ethnically, the participants were from Kalenjin, Kamba, Kikuyu, Luhya and Luo backgrounds with one participant not wanting to be associated with tribal identification. No discernible differences were noticed according to ethnic identification although this may have been a consequence of the low numbers interviewed for each ethnicity. The one exception was from two Luo community leaders who were able to provide rich insights into Katwekera and Luo activities that other participants lacked. Because time constraints did not allow for all the interviews to be carried out by the authors in January, four

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of the youth leaders, after following the necessary protocols, interviewed each other. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Research findings: 2018 Phase

During our 2018 fieldwork, peace work in Kibera during the run up to the 2017 elections included a wide range of activities, spanning interethnic dialogues, workshops and forums, training and capacity-building, sports, arts, competitions and tournaments, door-to-door peace education, work programmes and road shows. For example, sporting activities such as football, boxing and dance involved young people, bringing together different communities and creating a space for organisers to talk about peace after tournaments or competitions. In relation to the arts, drama groups, poetry and live music established spaces for interaction in which non-violence could be promoted: 'the message from the music was teaching you to forget about the past and the importance of togetherness' (Participant in 2018 study). Study participants spoke about the value of seminars, fora and workshops in bringing together people from different villages and political and ethnic backgrounds,

> *We put youths together in groups, we talk to them the importance of bringing peace because, without putting them together, they have different thinking. They can even kill, but if you put them together, you teach them the importance of bringing peace, they really understand.*

Between August and November, at various crises points between and after the two Presidential votes, study participants were moreover actively involved in early warning and rapid response activities and some of the women we interviewed in phase three of the 2018 study organised peace vigils.

This, peace work ahead of the 2017 elections both explicitly (through targeted activities) and implicitly (through peace messaging and a generalised discourse about violent masculinities) addressed this group of Kibera residents in their peace work. Being 'idle', as outlined above, was frequently identified as making (young) people susceptible to violence:

> *The best thing was, make them busy, organize seminars, workshops get them into some activities which they can do just for them to pass their time and forget about destruction because you know the devils mind is the devils workshop and the other time [during PEV of 07/08] they were doing that because they were totally idle and they were being paid to harass people by the big politicians.*

2022 Findings

Following analysis of the 2022 research into children's experiences and activities, a number of common themes were identified during the preceding literature review across the participants, namely organisation, insecurities, context, control and challenge and resilience.

Organization

Resources, or lack of, were reported by youth leaders to be fundamental in determining whether peace programmes should be developed and, if so, what the scale of activities could be. This 2022 phase of the fieldwork highlighted the local level of peace building with community organisation arranging events and meetings. Although some community leaders did refer to the background and funding roles of NGOs, the community members rarely mentioned international organisations. Within the 2022 recollections about organisational involvement in the 2017 elections, a couple of leaders made a notable addition when outlining the coordination of some activities by the National Cohesion Integration Commission. Overall, though, participants emphasised the contributions of multiple local institutions in peacebuilding events that were organised for or included children. For instance, they referred to the role of community workers and schools, where children were told 'we should just concentrate and pray … . And we were told … that during the election, people should stay at their home' (Female, 'child' during election).

Despite their involvement, resources were reported by community leaders to restrict whether activities occurred and, if so, how extensive. As a male youth leader explained,

> *Sometimes they don't have the resources because in order to create a peaceful event, you have to have some resources that includes money, include papers, pens and also those children, they'll be there like six to seven hours. You have to provide them with lunch. It is difficult for the school to organise it.*

Another male leader outlined how,

> *These things also need some kind of financial organisation. You cannot just walk into 10 schools … it is always good when you're going to those schools you buy them maybe a small milk packet. So as they drink, you are passing your message. The school head might also be happy to see our children having some milk … it works like that.*

Experiences of Insecurities

When asking about the peacebuilding events, the recent history of electoral violence in Kibera was said to inform emotions and activities for the 'children' and 'youth leaders'. Levels of tension and stress were mentioned by most of the participants with some describing the continuing impact across the elongated 2017 Presidential elections. With the election approaching, 'we feared that the war may start again' (Male, 'child').

> *The children don't feel safe … they.. always see the atmosphere changing. Things are no longer peaceful the way they used to be. Each candidate is trying to press up. Some of the language they use is scary. So these children … some of them are not peaceful (Male, youth leader).*

Al-Shabaab has particularly distinguished itself as one of the most advanced users of communication technology in terrorism and violent extremism.

Some of the fears at the time explicitly concerned gender-based violence against girls. These fears were largely expressed by youth leaders and a male 'child' whose sister stayed at home 'until the election period was over. Because we were feeling like girls are very vulnerable. They can be raped.' Incidents concerning the forced circumcision and castration described above, were not mentioned by any participant.

When asked why boys were allowed outside and their sisters had to remain indoors, a male youth captured the essence of the responses when saying, 'Because in African culture, we believe boys are more strong, if anything happens they can run away. But a girl child, if anything happens she can fall down because she is weak and maybe secondly she can be raped'. And reinforcing gender roles, such as the acceptability for boys to form protection gangs, contributes to them feeling, 'like they're now the big bosses. They feel like everyone is scare[d] of them.'

Alongside reporting the violence, some participants mentioned consequences such as closing schools which created mixed responses. As one male youth leader explained,

> *As much as in there was fear, you would meet these kids heading home or at home and playing and ask them why they're not in school and they would happily actually respond … when kids don't go to school they are happy.*

Other participants, including this female, who was a child during the elections, mentioned, 'we preferred to be safe than education. So by that time the academic syllabus went behind … And we wasted a lot of time.'

The past and expectations around village hotspots also led to different activities and tensions for children. For those living in predominantly Luo opposition supporting areas, where election results have been most contested, the atmosphere was reported to be angry with violent outbursts that incorporated some children. By comparison, in the non-Luo areas where most of the participants lived, there was fear of being attacked by Luo groups. A female who was a child at the time recalled thinking 'what goes on if those people [from Katwekera, the village most populated by Luos] now decide to

come to this other side? … Because they used to burn houses, fight, kill each other…. I had a lot of tension'. These fears were initially compounded as rolling news reports provided updates on Luo activities and only subsided when these attacks were reported to have ended and peace was emerging.

After establishing the largely passive nature of children's experiences, especially girls, during the elections, our attention shifts to position their more proactive activities within peace building and processes of violence. To provide structure to the nature of those involvements and shifting relations with adults, Kurtenbach and Pawelz' (2015) three factors of context, control and challenge are applied to help inform how the youth participation model can be adapted for the next generation.

Context

Multiple ways of participating in peacebuilding were reported for children during the 2017 elections. The participants referred to music festivals, singing, swimming, dancing, art, drama, football and boxing events that had been organised for boys and girls aged between 10 and 18. These activities were similar to the findings in the 2018 fieldwork concerning events organised across Kibera for communities. Peace was promoted in multiple ways through artwork with children encouraged to draw peace scenes and singing songs while cultural dancing showcased the different styles of ethnic groups within common themes. Competition was also introduced across the sporting and cultural tournaments with winning teams and individuals. Spectators were united to 'support the talent that is there. Even if they win or they lose, they'll be gifted with something. So that brings parents not to fight or argue' (Female, 'child'). How children were to be involved in events was considered within the planning phase. Different methods to engage children have been employed within the events. This variation is because,

> *A lot of times children do not like lectures … they'll say 'it is boring' Instead there are different models that are being used to spread peace. Children, as you know, they are playful … If you use different techniques to get them, then they're all going to show up (Male, youth leader).*

Despite these activities, there was recognition that programming for children were much fewer. A male leader believed that,

> *Even before election, people speak of peace, but they speak of peace to adults. They don't mind kids. It's like they don't care. They don't think that kids can see and can understand some of these things. Sometimes we open our televisions and watch news when, who is insulting who on tv and our kids are there. Not forgetting when they go back to school, they start calling names … you are that person of Raila. They're just connecting you next to your tribe (Male, youth leader).*

Control

In relation to control, the second factor for Kurtenbach and Pawelz (2015), adults were organising the above events and tournaments. They were also instrumental in transmitting messages of peace. For instance, school principals were instructing children to stay at home during the time of the results, to avoid being outside 'because anything might happen' (Female, 'child'). Staying indoors also required parents 'who are taking care of us and telling us to stay indoors' (Female, 'child'). This instruction tended to be applied mostly to women and daughters, as discussed below, who, with the exception of using washrooms, stayed indoors for a few weeks.

Combining enjoyable pastimes with peace messages led to children participating and being exposed to information they may not otherwise have experienced. Therefore,

> *When you start teaching kids on peace building, those are the things that you were able to fix from a young person understanding where and how to live with one another. It all begins there. If you don't start moulding a child on peace building, you'll never mould that person when he's holding a stone after the election (Male, youth leader).*

With many events accommodating people of different ages, towards the end of the activities some organisers separated adults and children. Messages were adapted according to audience. A number of the activities were also designed to provide children with the skills and interest to disseminate the peace messages which enabled them to take greater control of the messages. One male community leader captures this awareness raising role, when explaining how the different groups have played sports peacefully without fighting and they can live together,

> *Those activities were to teach kids that they are ambassadors of this. When they're taught about peace, when they become peaceful, they can go back home and preach the same peace to their families and even society at large.*

Another male youth leader outlined how someone with his level of experience may be unsuccessful in communicating messages with children. Consequently, 'I look for someone maybe among them, then I coach him or I tell him what to do. So by the time he relays that message, they say like that is coming from one of them.' The children selected were considered role models with those thought controversial not chosen for the role.

Socialising within homes was identified as fundamental in processes of children both becoming involved in peace and violence. When discussing how tribal hatred is transmitted, 'The parents kept telling kids, "this tribe, that tribe"' (Female, youth leader), 'my mom told me not to speak with you' (Male, youth leader) and parents say 'Don't go play with that kid because he's from such a tribe. You should only play with those ones because they are from our tribe' (Male, youth leader). The consequences of parental socialising fed into schooling, with experiences of children adopting their parents' views and singing party slogans on the way to school. Another participant recalled, an incident when at school a child 'went like, "I cannot sit down with a Kikuyu. This Kikuyu has to be moved from where I'm sitting. Kids were used to spread tribal hate'.

Some children were believed to be:

> *Living with your paranoid parents who are still beating you like shit, because the President did not become the President who they expected. … they come and argue in the house. Who did what? Who did that? They hate who? That is directly transferred to that child. When that child goes to school, what do you expect? 'I don't like you because you voted a Kikuyu' (Male, youth leader).*

When discussing the predominantly Luo village of Katwekera, a male youth leader explained that,

> *Whenever violence breaks out, the women are always there. Throwing stones, their husbands. The children are no exception. Because they tend to see, if my mother and father are picking up stones and throwing at the other person, then I should also go the same … if that thing is not tamed there, then these other children of the lower part, will also copy when they see their fellow friends throwing stones.*

The emphasis on the transmission of violence is picked up within wider familial relations with punishments including the denial of food and spanking from parents who are reported to be constantly angry, 'A question will provoke a slap' (Male, youth leader). Moreover, within one-room living accommodation, little is hidden from children such as 'domestic violence where your dad is just beating your mom and being very unloving to them' (Male, youth leader). These divisive and aggressive messages within familial socialising processes were often reinforced within social interactions occurring within place-based relationships that had geographically and ethnically narrowed over recent years. Youth leaders commented on the demographic shifts that followed the 2008 violence, which resulted in some previously mixed villages now being largely ethnically homogenous. After the population movements,

> *It's no longer a cosmopolitan idea, whereby you can have one village having all the tribes. Now like Kikuyus, Kambas, Kisiis, are in Laini Saba. You go to Lindi its Nubians, Makina Nubians, You go to Silanga and Undugu people from the Western. You go to Katwekera, people mostly from Luo. I think when people divided themselves in the villages in that manner brought all the difference down to the kids. The kids are affected by how the setup is at present (Male, youth leader).*

Children also have very different experiences in the extent of their involvement in demonstrations and political violence. Participants referred to some children aged 14 to 17 who were reported to have been hurt, tear gassed and who act as security for politicians, bringing chaos, stealing and throwing stones. 'They start manipulating people there asking them if you can't vote for this person, then you're supposed not be here' (Male, youth leader).

Rather than discourage children from becoming involved, these boys were reported to participate after being offered KES50. Some of the consequences of their involvement were 'a few casualties, children being shot, injuries. … generally our politicians use those young people because they know they are strong, they're energetic, they're chaotic' (Male, youth leader).

And street children were considered to be the most likely both to participate and be targeted by the police. These children were reported to be 'used by people … they don't have food … you may find that this person [politician] … might give them food. So he tells them, can you do this, this for me so I don't lose … sometimes you might find them fighting' (Female, 'child').

Generally, the police are believed not to be aggressive towards children which led one male community leader to consider that this approach was manipulated by 'adults [who] also use kids sometimes as a problem. You realise police will be soft on you if you have kids on the road.' Street children are more vulnerable 'because most of the time they don't have a place to go live in. So like you find those police, some just have a heartless heart. So you may find some beating them, accusing them of things they didn't do' (Female, 'child').

Challenge

Applying the fieldwork data to the third factor of challenge follows the above patterns of involvement in peacebuilding and participating in violence, except this time the children are taking the lead. Hence while not necessarily challenging the system, some participants questioned the sense that children inevitably follow their parental instructions and tribal loyalties. As one male leader explained,

> *Children are innocent … when you tell your [child] that person is such a tribe, don't talk to him or her, the child won't listen because he doesn't understand the language because he's still young.*

When asked for more information concerning the time period when children lose their innocence and become more tribal, the participant estimated around the age of 10. At this life stage, tribal identification becomes stronger and 'I have to avoid this person because he's such a tribe then have to talk with this person because he's such a tribe'. Ten was also identified, by another male (Luo) youth leader, as the youngest age when predominantly Luo boys 'are always there throwing [stones] with the big people … People are just marching screaming. And then you see small boys in-between them'.

Older children were considered by some participants to critically analyse peace talks in schools. Classes aged between eight and eighteen engage with presenters, asking questions and then have the maturity to take forward peace messages into their homes and friendship groups. Moreover, as the earlier example about coaching mentors highlighted, children become empowered, able to connect to their peer audiences through language, behaviour and credibility in ways that older generations cannot. The topics by which children become the voices for the generation includes peacebuilding and daily challenges such as hygiene problems for girls and drug abuse for boys. And with children taking the lead, the community groups realised that messages would be spread within different fora and could permeate into other groups across Kibera.

The importance of friendship groups within processes of pacification was emphasised by participants including this female 'child' who described how tensions arose surrounding the cross-cutting nature of tribal identification and politics. When it is felt 'like we are reaching to a point of maybe fighting or bringing that hatred, sometimes we just say like, okay let us put politics behind us. And we bring that friendship together' by changing focus such as watching a movie.

And two 'boys' (one Kikuyu and the other Luo), who were interviewed together, mentioned that being part of a group together on the streets during the tensions. When asked why instead of following their parents' instruction not to remain friends with 'rival' tribes, the boys had chosen to be part of the same group, they referred to their friendship bond. In particular, 'these elections, they're things that come and go. And this election cannot temper our friendship.'

These male participants described being in groups of between three to ten boys who were on the streets. Reasons provided for why they were outdoors, when girls were staying indoors, drew upon distinctions in gender associated behaviour outlined above and also practicalities such as, 'you just stay close to each other. Don't be alone at that time'... while another male child described how 'we were anxious. Because we feared that maybe even where we were [the village of Laini Saba], that place could be burned up or we beaten by those who were making those demonstrations.'

The belief that children were protesting because they had been told to or had been manipulated, as discussed above under the control factor, is countered by some other 'children' and community leaders. Two male 'children' referred to two orphans who had been their friends who became supporters in political rallies at which they were throwing stones. These street children 'knew what they were doing'. A male community leader outlined how 'the kids were on the streets demonstrating … Did anyone tell the kids it was wrong … No one. Is there anyone who showed up to tell kids that it's wrong to go burning tires on the roads? No one did.'

That no one told the children is challenged by another youth who believed that adults tend to 'push the children away'. Nevertheless, 'there are those children that are very tough headed. They'll still follow the crowd regardless. I have not seen children start like violence in the crowd, but they could be involved in that process where it has already started.' Such differing views of children challenging highlights multiple experiences and activities that under 18-year-olds encounter in Kibera. The myriad of experiences means that seeking to apply a generic understanding of children during electoral tensions would be unfounded.

Resilience in Kibera

Our previous studies have highlighted layers of resilience within Kibera across the youth and adult groups (Vertigans et al. 2020, Gibson et al 2021). Similarly, although not the focal point of this project, resilience features within the 2022 research findings. Children, families and community resources enable a return to 'normality' across the participants. Conscious of the past consequences that have accompanied electoral tensions, families prepared, applying tactics to keep safe indoors which also required pre planning and the purchasing of food and other supplies for the anticipated duration of the self-imposed lockdowns. Updates were provided through television and the social media which helped inform emotions that were highest during the greatest uncertainties and threats of violence. Heightened emotions lessened when politicians 'were saying good things to encourage us on television … that we should make peace. We should not fight and we should pray to God' (Female, 'child').

Resilience is also informed by post-election willingness to separate the political and personal. Such a separation is exemplified by a male community leader who described how people would accept payment to chase away their neighbours from a rival ethnic group. 'Then maybe after some few months, we'll meet again and you greet me … they normally believe it's nothing personal. It's just that job'.

A female 'child' expands on this type of observation when commenting that,

> *After the elections we come together and that we're like okay, the President has been elected, so what next from here? So we need to be together to go to the next step. To be like the community we used to be to help one another. That's what really happens.*

Resilience in children is identified in particular by their willingness to move forward and to return to pre-election relationships and activities as this example from a male community leader highlights:

> *But, you see the beauty with kids is that they forget much easily. You will tell them not to speak with them, but after a few weeks they'll go back. Friends even have fun. They're not affected as the adults will be affected because for them it will reach a point they will forget about it. But the adults, it'll remain with them.*

This resilience will inform how children are involved in, and are affected by, the forthcoming electoral tensions.

Children, Peacebuilding and the 2022 Elections

With the 2022 election approaching, a range of similar activities have been organised for children such as music, art sport and different types of competition. Some participants mentioned that politicians were organising activities with community leaders within programmes telling people to practise peace. Some of the participants in the events were then split into age groups including children, as outlined above, where sensitising fora are held. From these interviewees there was a sense that some politicians were being more responsible in the nature of peace messages that were being communicated. And as one female 'child' observed,

> *There are those who are vying for those seats, that are trying to impose the peace. So they bring up like those football tournaments, like that music, like those seminars to bring people together and tell them the importance of peace.*

Awareness of these events was understandably highest amongst the youth leaders with the 2017 election 'children' less informed. Nevertheless, this group of participants also referenced activities with some concluding such as the preceding female 'child' that,

> *This time around … they're really promoting peace because if they bring up those activities, they bring people together … because like the more we interact with those kids from other places, we share idea. We bring that friendship. So I think this time around it'll be better.*

CONCLUSION

By applying Kurtenbach and Pawlez (2015) three factors for youth participation, we have been able to incorporate the engagement of children across context, control and challenge in a way that extends attempts to learn how peace is 'youthed' to how it is also 'childrened', partly shaped by children and their agency. These findings provide both support and opposition to the main bodies of research into both peacebuilding and violence in which children are either invisible or only noticeable in their passive roles as victims. Some children do fit this passive or victim narrative, with their experiences of emotional difficulties and are neither proactively involved in peace making nor violence. Levels of involvement tended to be restricted to attending community events organised by adults principally to experience sporting or cultural activities with peace messages attached. The largely local organisation of these events is indicative of the bottom up and everyday processes which have only recently been recognised within recent debates about peace-making.

Moreover, children are also more proactively involved than the literature suggests. Within peacebuilding, children are spreading messages at events and within family and peer groups. And children are also organising defence groups to protect their village against perceived threats. Against backgrounds that emphasise the divisive and interweaving nature of tribal identifications and political allegiance, children were disobeying adults to continue with inter-tribal friendship groups. There are indicators that the physical blurring of appearances between some children aged between 14 and 17 compared with those 18 and above means that peacebuilding and violence associated with youth also incorporates children.

None of the participants reported being personally responsible for electoral violence. Nevertheless, there were numerous reports of children being involved in violent actions and participation in demonstrations during the 2017 electoral tensions. Aside from the intended community defenders above, the children involved were considered to either be living on the street and/or from particular parts of Kibera. This distinction in groups involved in violence was also noticeable amongst the 'peaceful' children. Our study has highlighted variations within the experiences of children within the same informal settlement. Intersectional analysis has shown important differences in experiences of anxieties, peacebuilding and participation. Most notably boys are more likely to be proactive both in peace activities and demonstrations with the latter also shaped by geographic location and tribal identification. And male children within Katwekera are described at the opposing end to girls in other villages within the victim-perpetrator binary. These males fit the aggressive angry narrative that is widely applied to dislocated youths within conflict studies.

Because the research was undertaken in January and February 2022, the fieldwork is only a snapshot of peacebuilding programmes at that point. There were promising signs that politicians were being responsible in connecting sponsored programmes with combined manifesto and peace messages. It maybe that there has been a recognition of the appeal to voters of peace messages. The electoral alliances may also undermine some of the longstanding tensions within Kibera. However, there are no grounds for complacency. Peacebuilding events continue to rely on funding which creates pressures especially when connected to funder political expectations. Moreover as the political alignments and fragmentations continue to shift villages that have largely avoided previous electoral violence may become more vulnerable. Whatever unfolds, children will be present through their invisibility behind closed doors, by participating in peacebuilding and carrying out violent acts. Their ideas and behaviours are being shaped by this election and these experiences will inform attitudes and relationships in future years. Consequently, we finish by repeating a particularly pertinent quote from a youth leader, 'It all begins there [childhood]. If you don't start moulding a child on peacebuilding, you'll never mould that person when he's holding a stone after the election'.

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