

CHILDREN AND WAR

Toolkit

EVEN WARS HAVE LIMITS



PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

At any given moment, throughout the world, there are millions of children affected by conflict. They are forcibly displaced from their homes. They witness atrocities. They commit atrocities. They are victims of sexual and gender-based violence. They are abducted. They are maimed and killed.

But they are also resilient. Given the opportunity and the resources, children affected by conflict can become peacebuilders and peacemakers in their communities and in ours.

The purpose of this toolkit is to help you get engaged on the issue of children affected by war by giving you an overview of the realities faced by children in conflict zones and the basic knowledge you need to take action

Learn. Be involved. Become a leader. Take our challenge.

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THE RED CROSS RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

“Would it not be possible, in time of peace and quiet, to form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by

**ZEALOUS,
DEVOTED,
AND
THOROUGHLY
QUALIFIED
VOLUNTEERS?”**



A Swiss businessman, Henry Dunant, asked this question in 1859 after witnessing suffering on an Italian battlefield. What he experienced would later lead him to create the Red Cross, which would become the largest and oldest humanitarian organization in the world.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** was founded in 1863.

Three entities make up the Movement: the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the Federation) and the National Societies, such as the Canadian Red Cross. National Societies assist primarily in humanitarian issues within their country's borders.

Headquartered out of Geneva, Switzerland, the Federation focuses on disaster response and the health of vulnerable people. It also provides support to all National Societies.

The ICRC is also based in Geneva and provides humanitarian relief and assistance in times of conflict and crisis.

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS

The Canadian Red Cross was created and recognized in 1909. Today, the Canadian Red Cross offers programs such as:

Disaster Management

Canadian Red Cross provides relief and aid during times of disasters, such as house fires, floods, hurricanes, chemical spills, etc.

RespectED

Canadian Red Cross violence and abuse prevention program works with schools and communities to help fight against bullying and other forms of abuse.

Humanitarian Issues Program (HIP)

HIP involves engaging youth to empower and create global citizens. Through the program, high school and university students take on activities linked to themes such as discrimination, conflict, disaster, international development, children and war, women and war, landmines, small arms and HIV/AIDS.



SINCE
1909

HUMANITY

IMPARTIALITY

NEUTRALITY

INDEPENDENCE

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

UNITY

UNIVERSALITY

THE



The Movement is guided by the following Fundamental Principles which guarantee the consistency of the Movement and its humanitarian work:

01

Humanity

Endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found.

02

Impartiality

Makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.

03

Neutrality

May not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

05

Voluntary service

Voluntary and not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

04

Independence

Must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

06

Unity

There can only be one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

07

Universality

All Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other.

For more information please [click here](#)

ARMED CONFLICT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

International armed conflicts—wars between two states, fought on the battlefield between uniformed and organized armed forces—are largely a reality of the past.



The armed conflicts witnessed today are mostly internal or non-international. They are often fought between a uniformed armed group, perhaps the military forces of a country and a non-government armed force. Fighters often target civilian populations including ethnic, racial and religious groups. This creates a state of terror in the country that permeates the social fabric. Vulnerable groups (women, children, the elderly, the disabled, etc.), are especially at risk of being persecuted and populations already living in poverty carry a heavy burden. All of this causes the displacement of millions every year.

The difference between international and non-international armed conflicts is important in the application of international humanitarian law (IHL). IHL is a set of laws that seeks to limit the effects of armed conflicts. The ICRC is the guardian of IHL; the foundation of IHL are the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its Additional Protocols.

Children are especially affected in conflict zones. Not only are their safety and security threatened by the actual violence, but in many cases, they are also impacted by malnutrition, absence of clean water sources and lack of access to healthcare and medication. While children are resilient, the psychological effects of war can be devastating. Sexual and gender-based violence is a reality that has become central in today's conflict zones. Rape is not only physically and psychologically detrimental to the victim but also socially detrimental, since victims can face shame and marginalization. Sexual violence can also further spread HIV/AIDS.



PROTECTING CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

Children and childhood are not the same in every society and culture.

Who is considered a child, and how and when children are considered adults, are social norms that vary over time and space.



Whether it is in times of conflict, natural disasters or humanitarian crises, children are often one of the first populations impacted. Because of this, they have **general protection** under international law as well as **special protection** due to their unique vulnerabilities.

According to Article 1, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), a child is defined under international law as

“every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”



How do you define childhood?
Do you consider yourself a child or an adult?

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL PROTECTION

International law is the group of laws that have been agreed to by governments as well as international customary law.

All of these laws span different topics such as trade, human rights, armed conflict, and weapons. Governments get to choose which international laws (which are called treaties and conventions) they agree to. Once a government agrees to adopt an international law the country is called a State Party to the law. A government may first sign onto an international law (called becoming a signatory) which means that they support the overall rule. A country must then ratify the international law in order to complete the process and adopt the law in its own country. Customary International Law consists of rules that come from the consistent conduct of States acting in the belief that the law required them to act that way.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are granted on the basis of being human; they are the most fundamental rights that apply to all individuals in times of peace and conflict. Modern human rights are found in a series of human rights conventions. The most important human rights convention for children is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

THE CONVENTION STATES THAT GOVERNMENTS HAVE FOUR SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT:

1

Authorities have to respect and make sure others respect international humanitarian law especially when it applies to children.

2

Authorities must make sure that persons who have not turned fifteen years of age do not take part in hostilities.

3

If a government has to recruit people between the ages of fifteen and eighteen the government has to take the older recruits before it accepts the recruits who are younger.

4

Authorities must protect civilians during times of armed conflict and must do all that they can to protect and care for children who are affected by the armed conflict.

The Convention also has two Optional Protocols. The **Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict** changes the minimum age for compulsory recruitment to 18 and requires States to do everything they can to prevent individuals under the age of 18 from participating in hostilities. The **Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography** draws special attention to the criminalization of these serious violations of children's rights and emphasizes the importance of fostering increased public awareness and international cooperation in efforts to combat them.

As human beings, children are also granted rights through other human rights conventions, such as the:

- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

IHL

International Humanitarian Law provides a series of protections during times of armed conflict. These laws are found in the Geneva Conventions¹ and their Additional Protocols².

As civilians, children are given general protection with fundamental guarantees. Children are entitled to respect for their right to life and for their physical and mental integrity. International humanitarian law also grants special protection to children as particularly vulnerable persons.

Find out more about IHL in the [Resources Section](#)

THE UNITED NATIONS

UN

The United Nations is an international body devoted to maintaining international peace and security, strengthening cooperation between states and helps promote social progress in areas such as human rights, poverty and child rights. The UN and its various bodies have adopted many reports and resolutions on children affected by war to help strengthen the existing norms and standards that protect children impacted by armed conflict.

For more information visit [Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT

IHL PROVIDES PROTECTION IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

Humanitarian aid

- Children are guaranteed access to the essentials of life including food, water, clothing and shelter.
- Parties in conflict are obliged to permit the free passage of all essential foodstuff and clothing intended for children.³
- Children should be given priority in the distribution of relief consignments.⁴

Medical care

- Children must receive priority during evacuations from besieged or encircled areas and be sheltered in hospitals and safety zones.
- Children are allowed to be temporarily evacuated to neutral countries for medical reasons.⁵

Education and Culture

- Children should be able to receive an education and their culture and traditions should be respected.⁶

Exemption from the death penalty

- Children under the age of 18 cannot be sentenced to the death penalty in relation to any crimes committed.⁷

Protection of children from combat

- The recruitment of children under the age of 15 into armed forces is prohibited.
- Child combatants under the age of 15 are still entitled to the special protection provided to children under the [Geneva Conventions](#).

Protection of children in captivity

- Children arrested, detained or [interned](#) should be held in separate quarters from adults unless they remain with family members.⁸
- Interned children should be given additional food to meet physiological needs.⁹

Children separated from their families

- [International humanitarian law](#) provides for the preservation of family unity
- Authorities must help to find out the identity of children who have been separated from their families including who their parents are.¹⁰
- Parties to a conflict are obliged to keep members of the same family together if they are interned.¹¹

Notes for this section can be found under References on the [Resources page](#).

According to a popular theory,
if you are one step away
from each person you know
and two steps from each person
they know, then

**YOU ARE
NO MORE THAN
SIX STEPS AWAY
FROM EVERY
HUMAN BEING
ON EARTH.**

6

**DEGREES
OF CONNECTIVITY**



How connected are you
to a child affected by
armed conflict?

THE GIRL CHILD

? Close your eyes and imagine
a child in a conflict zone ...
Did you see a boy or a girl?

In order to understand the reality of children affected by conflict, it is important to consider the particular experiences of both boys and girls, based on their gender.

Women and girls all over the world suffer the trauma of war—as widows or orphans, sometimes displaced from their homes or detained. They are often separated from loved ones and become victims of violence and intimidation. Girls and women are particularly targeted for sexual violence or gender-based violence. In conflict zones, girls often become the head of their households, taking care of their younger siblings when adults are unavailable to care for them.

Women and girls can also become fighters and are given the same protections as men if wounded or captured. They are also bound by the same rules prohibiting illegal acts against other fighters or civilians.



Rape can be a method of warfare, used by armed groups to torture, injure, extract information, degrade, displace, intimidate, punish or simply to destroy the fabric of the community.



The mere threat of sexual violence can cause entire communities to flee their homes.

ICRC Children in War 2009 Toolkit

CHILD SOLDIERS

Children are voluntarily recruited, coerced or forced into joining government, opposition and paramilitary forces.

The United Nations (UN) definition of child soldiers is:

any person under **age 18** who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. This definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms.

Child soldiers are used in countries throughout the world including in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.¹² The experiences of these children differ greatly from one conflict to another and from one armed group to another. Child soldiers may be forced to witness and commit grave atrocities, while others may be grateful for protection and access to food and shelter in difficult times. However, rape, drugs, violence and shame are often part of their normal lives.

While there are many child soldiers in use throughout the world, many have also been released from armed groups as a result of peace agreements and demobilization and reintegration programs that remove children from armed groups and attempt to reintegrate them into society. These children have a chance at rebuilding their future in a peaceful way.



Who uses child soldiers?

Child soldiers have been used by government military forces or militias, as well as non-government armed forces.

Why do groups use child soldiers?

Groups use child soldiers because they are impressionable, readily available, expendable and easily influenced. Using child soldiers also allows some groups to go to war.

For a detailed list of countries where child soldiers have been involved in conflicts, [visit this site](#).

**“Ask them not to hide the sun
with their planes and not to
shatter our dreams with bombs.
Children are born to dream.”**

Dragan, 14 years old



Akaash remembers joining an armed group in Nepal at the age of ten:
**Because they offered me money,
a weapon and an opportunity to prove
that I was something.**

How do children find themselves in armed groups?

Volunteer recruitment

Children may join armed groups for a variety of reasons such as ideological and patriotic reasons or in response to a lack of economic and political opportunity or for access to food, water and shelter. Others may be lured by their friends' or parents' participation in combat or by the opportunity to seek revenge over the death of a loved-one.

Coercion

Children may be lured into the groups by friends and family through peer pressure.

Forced recruitment

Children can be abducted, drugged, abused and shamed into joining armed groups. Some are tortured and abused and are forced to commit and witness atrocities, making it difficult for them to return to their communities. For instance, the rape of girls and boys is frequently used to prevent children from attempting to return to their families in societies where sexual violence is met with shame and isolation.

Why are disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs so important?

DDR programs aim to remove and disarm children associated with armed groups and help them reintegrate into society. These programs provide children with food and shelter, medical attention, education and skills/trade training (carpentry, sewing, etc.) to allow them to reenter their communities peacefully.

According to the ICRC, "Demobilization and reintegration of children is essential for the rebuilding of societies

torn apart by violence. The first priority is to reunite them with their families and home communities. They must be reintroduced into the educational system and helped to find employment through vocational training or income-generating projects. This is crucial for preventing their becoming marginalized, which often leads to their being recruited again."¹³

What are people doing to help prevent the use of child soldiers?

There are many organizations, including the International

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), who actively educate and speak on behalf of child soldiers to advocate for change.

Many humanitarian organizations, such as the Canadian Red Cross, implement community initiatives to keep children out of conflict. These programs provide counseling and education to help reintegrate former child soldiers back into society. An example is the Red Cross Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR) Program in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The ICRC also visits child

soldiers who have been imprisoned to lobby for fair treatment and for their release and reunites displaced children of conflict with their families.

See [Focus on Liberia \(pg. 26\)](#) and [Focus on Sierra Leone \(pg. 28\)](#).

Internationally, the International Criminal Court is prosecuting individuals for their involvement in enlisting child soldiers.

Most importantly, ordinary citizens of the world, like yourself, must educate themselves and their governments on the issue of child soldiers and then speak out for change.

"In refugee and IDP camps all over the world, girls and boys are spending their most developmentally crucial years in conditions of almost unimaginable misery and squalor. To spend even a day in a refugee camp is too long for a child; yet, we know that children live in these camps for year [sic] — and, in some cases, for generations."

Statement by Carol Bellamy to the 53rd session of the executive committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (30 September 2002)

DISPLACED CHILDREN

Much too often, children are forced to flee their homes to protect themselves from armed conflicts. They often have to travel great distances and are frequently victims of violent sexual and physical attacks. They may become vulnerable to malnutrition and diseases and are frequently separated from their families. They are also exposed to other dangers including exploitation.

Even though the intention may be to leave their home temporarily, people can be displaced for decades. They may find themselves in camps or are forced to settle in other villages and cities. Many children are born into camps, and many more spend their entire childhoods there. The security situation in and around camps often makes children vulnerable to abduction, abuse and trafficking. Child soldiers are often recruited from camps because of the high density of children.

Being displaced for a long period of time can result in an increased risk of poverty from the loss of land, detention or an inability to resume schooling.

The distinction between different displaced populations is important to understand because of the specific realities and challenges associated with each.

EIGHTEEN MILLION CHILDREN

**WERE FORCED TO FLEE THEIR HOMES IN 2008,
BECOMING EITHER REFUGEES OR INTERNALLY
DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS).**

ICRC CHILDREN IN WAR TOOLKIT 2009





Being displaced for a long period of time can result in an increased risk of **poverty** from the **loss of land**, **detention** or an **inability to resume schooling**.

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who is forced to flee from persecution. They must be outside of their country of origin and have a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The [Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) offers legal protection to refugees.

For more information visit [UNHCR](#)

Who is an internally displaced person (IDP)?

An internally displaced person (IDP) is someone who has fled their home but remains in their country of origin. An IDP may have fled home because of fear of persecution or human rights violations but, unlike refugees, they may also have fled because of a natural disaster.

Who is an asylum-seeker?

An asylum-seeker is someone who has left their country of origin and is seeking refugee status in another country. They must wait until a formal decision is made in order to be accepted into the country.

Who is responsible for refugees?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is responsible for protecting and providing assistance to refugees.

Who is responsible for IDPs?

National authorities (governments) are responsible for the welfare of internally displaced people. However, where the national authorities are unable or unwilling to help, the ICRC steps in to provide for the most urgent needs of displaced people. IHL as well as human rights law also offer legal protections to IDPs.

Additionally, many other humanitarian organizations provide care for both refugees and IDPs all over the world.

To find out more about refugees, IDPs and asylum-seekers, visit the [ICRC's website](#).

15.4 million refugees

47%

of the world's refugees
are women and girls.

44%

of the world's refugees
are children.¹⁴

LANDMINES AND CLUSTER MUNITIONS CHILDREN AS VICTIMS

For most children, playing outside or walking to school are safe and fun activities to do. But this is not the case for many others. Children that grow up in areas of armed conflict may face dangers that remain long after the conflict has ended.

Two weapons of war that put children at risk during and after conflicts are landmines and cluster munitions.

These weapons are designed to maim and kill. Victims may lose limbs or their life and these victims are often children.

What are antipersonnel landmines?

Antipersonnel landmines are designed to injure or kill by exploding when a person approaches or makes contact. They are usually hidden from sight and contain an explosive component that is used to scatter shrapnel to harm the victim.

Are antipersonnel mines legal?

In 1997, states came together to create a convention to stop the use of antipersonnel mines. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction makes it illegal for State Parties to use, develop, produce, stockpile or transfer these weapons or to help anyone else do so. The Convention is the most comprehensive international instrument for getting rid of landmines and deals with everything from mine use to victim assistance and mine clearance.

The Convention bans mines because:

- a. they are indiscriminate meaning they cannot tell the difference between the footsteps of a child and those of a soldier;
- b. they remain long after conflict has ended;
- c. the harm caused to civilians and civilian objects outweighs their value as a weapon of war.

As of March 2010, there were 158 member states of the treaty. Approximately 40 countries remain outside of the treaty entirely, including China, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia and the United States.



Gioergi, 17 years old

I can hardly remember anything except a terrible boom. My left hand was badly injured and bleeding. I once dreamed of being a good wrestler, but now the dream is over.

What are cluster munitions?

Cluster munitions are canisters that can be launched from air or ground and contain anywhere from dozens to hundreds of individual submunitions or “bomblets”. These bomblets can blanket massive areas.

Similar to antipersonnel mines, cluster munitions explode on impact. However they have a high failure rate, and the remains of the unexploded devices and submunitions can lead to people getting injured or killed for decades after a conflict has ended.

Are cluster munitions legal?

These weapons pose serious social and humanitarian concerns, since they have a high failure rate and do not discriminate between civilian and military targets. Therefore, civilians are at a very high risk of being affected by cluster munitions. In 2008, governments came together to create the **Convention on Cluster Munitions** which aims to ban the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of these weapons. All governments, armed forces and armed groups—in particular those who possess and stockpile cluster munitions—must fully implement its provisions.

What are the long term impacts of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions?

The unexploded landmines and cluster munitions that remain after a conflict has ended are referred to as the explosive remnants of war. These unexploded devices cause many important activities to become dangerous such as farming, hunting, traveling and the reconstruction of buildings.

In countries infected with landmines, it is the rural poor who are most likely to suffer including farmers (whose access to fields may be limited), nomads, herders, displaced populations fleeing from conflict or those returning home after a conflict has ended. The clearance of these weapons is often delayed by a lack of resources, leaving landmines and cluster munitions to kill and injure at random for decades.

What are the effects of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions on children?

Children are curious by nature and will often mistake unexploded remnants of war as toys or possible items of value. Or they will step on a landmine accidentally while playing or doing basic chores, such as collecting firewood. Because of their small size, children are closer to the blast.

Those who survive often have serious injuries, including the loss of limbs. Children who have lost a limb(s) require

new prosthetics approximately every six months because of their growth rate and many families are not financially able to support a child with these medical requirements. Even if families can afford prosthetics, they are not always available, and many children are unable to continue working or fulfilling a certain role within their family or community due to their injuries. Besides having a continued risk to their safety, many children may have lost a parent or other family member because of a landmine or cluster bomb explosion.

There are anywhere between
45–50 million mines
still in the ground.¹⁵

70%
of known casualties
were civilians.

1/3 of the casualties
were children,
of these **73%**
were boys.

LIBERIA

CHILD ADVOCACY & REHABILITATION

(CAR)

THE NEED

Liberia is a small tropical country located along the western coastline of Africa, once renowned for its universities, art and culture. Fourteen years of civil instability from 1989 to 2003 however, significantly reduced the country's living standards, including its education and infrastructure.

While no one knows the exact number of children who participated in the civil war, “during the early part of 2003, as many as 20,000 children had been recruited into warring factions against their will.”¹⁶



After the War

Liberia was unprepared for the large groups of youth who had gone through years with no schooling, no family and who had endured the ravages of war, Liberia's capital saw many youth aimlessly roaming the streets, stealing and looting to survive.

The Red Cross Response: Liberia Centre for Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR)

To help the youth affected by the conflict, the Liberian Red Cross Society (LRCS), in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross and other Red Cross national societies, developed the Centre for Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR) program in 2001.

The Centre works hand in hand with communities, which identify the children that are most vulnerable and in need of CAR programs. After students complete the program they are reintegrated back into the public school system or supported in their efforts to begin work. Each centre enrolls 150 youth each year for an 11-month program.

The Liberia CAR program works with children who:

- Are 10 to 18 years of age;
- Have been fighters, porters or witnessed heinous crimes such as death of parents or killing of people;
- Have received little or no education, and are unable to read and write; and
- Are vulnerable and poverty stricken.

The CAR program provides:

- Basic reading and math skills for children from 10–13 years of age.
- Advanced reading and math courses for youth 10–18 years of age.
- Vocational training (i.e. carpentry, masonry, tailoring, welding, and dyeing) in order to complement students' education with practical and locally appropriate skills.
- Counselling in family and emotional wellness, both individually and in groups to help children and youth cope with trauma and war-related experiences.
- Start-up kits to students who complete their education and training, in order to give graduates the tools necessary to use their new skills to help support their families and rebuild their communities.
- One year follow up support with counselling and family visits.

CAR Liberia has been considered a success by its youth, their families and communities. The staff and the communities all see the transformation that the youth go through. They are less rebellious and their aggression has slowly been replaced by a willingness to discuss problems rather than fight. Their parents and communities are proud of what their children become. Though the memories of their experiences will not leave them, the program leaves them in a position where they are able to lead normal lives.

George H.
16 years old
October 25, 2003

"Last year, I was still in school and on my way home to Congo town (Monrovia, Liberia).

There were government forces in my neighbourhood. They had come in pickup trucks and forced us to go with them to Lofa.

That day, I had just left school, put down my books and was outside. They told us, 'we are looking for people to fight', not really asking you, just picking you up.

There was no choice."

CAR program aims to provide individual attention to war-affected youth and to contribute to post-graduate independence and self-sufficiency.

Monitoring of newly graduated students continues after they return to their communities.

CAR Centre is a new building on two acres of land just outside the capital, Monrovia. It offers access to recreation and sports facilities and cultural and drama shows.

Individual counseling sessions have been conducted for over 4,000 people.

As of 2011, 600 youth have graduated and another 300 have enrolled in the two centres.

SIERRA LEONE

CHILD ADVOCACY & REHABILITATION (CAR)

THE NEED

Sierra Leone is a small West African country surrounded by Guinea in the northeast, Liberia to the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. Ten years of civil war throughout the 1990s in Sierra Leone has destroyed homes, caused severe damage to family and community relationships and the mental well-being of a population exposed to horrific violence, atrocities and death.

“During the war, my family was running away from the rebels. But they shot my brother and took me. I was so young I didn’t even remember my mother. When I came to the Red Cross centre, I joined the weaving class. I was very happy to get this opportunity.”

Aminata Conteh, 15 years old

The large number of children who served in Sierra Leone’s armed forces had been forcibly abducted into an armed group, often under highly traumatic circumstances. Children had multiple roles based on their age, physical strength and the circumstances of the armed group, including combat, domestic activities and forced marriage. Children also spied, they looted, they recruited and commanded other child soldiers, and they guarded the country’s diamond mines.¹⁷

After the War

Many children were not reunited with their families after the conflict. Some were so young when abducted that they did not remember who their families were. Others had been rejected by their families, or the fear of stigma and rejection led them to refuse to go back to their communities. Many girls in particular faced stigma and rejection for having become “bush wives” (this was the term given to girls who were forced to be wives of soldiers).

The Red Cross Response: Sierra Leone Centre for Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR)

In 2001 with the support of the Canadian Red Cross and other Red Cross National Societies, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society opened the Centre for Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR) in order to help the large number of youth who had been affected by the civil war. This centre provided youth with an opportunity for counselling and psychosocial support, basic literacy and numeracy training, and vocational training. As of 2011, there are now five CAR centres in Sierra Leone each working hard to support youth affected by war.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society continues to support youth even after they graduate. Some become able to return to school and others get apprenticeships or set up their own businesses. Similar to Liberia’s CAR programme, Sierra Leone’s CAR has been considered a success, providing opportunities for youth, their families and communities.

BE INVOLVED

TAKING ACTION ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

We've broken down actions into three categories:

- Fundraising
- Raising Awareness
- Using your voice with the government and the media



! THERE ARE
■ MANY WAYS
■ TO TAKE **ACTION.**

Here are a few tips and ideas on how to organize an event to benefit children affected by conflict.

1

SET THE GOALS

The idea of this stage is to form a general direction of the event. You can go down to specifics later.

- a. What is the purpose of the event? What do you want to accomplish?
 - e.g. Fundraise? Raise awareness? Team building?
- b. What type of event will you have?
 - e.g. If you want to do a fundraiser, there are several options: benefit concert, movie showing, etc.
- c. What is your goal?
 - number of attendees, funds raised, etc.
- d. What can you imagine people who attend doing and talking about afterwards?

2

PLAN THE DETAILS

Now it's time to think about little details. Break your goals down to achievable objectives so you can get to work. Once it's all laid out, be sure to divide up your tasks.

- a. Logistics
 - When and where will it happen?
 - For how many people?
 - Special equipment : sound equipment? Lighting?
 - Will you have food or entertainment?
 - What is the budget?
- b. Resources
 - What do you already have?
 - Does anyone have a good relationship with a local restaurant that can donate? Can anyone help transport the sound equipment?
 - What will you need?
- c. Timeline
 - Assign specific tasks to individuals.
 - Personal timeline: Develop deadlines for each task.
 - Group timeline: When will you meet to finalize each part of the project?
 - External timeline: Deadline for media and caterers.
- d. Advertise

Consistent theme: Catch phrase/image
Use a variety of media: Websites, posters, e-mails...you name it!

3

IMPLEMENT

- a. Follow your timeline and be flexible to your current situation.
- b. Confirm all bookings and guests a week before.
- c. Arrive early and make sure you have a Plan B.
- d. Make sure everyone has a copy of the plan and knows what their tasks are.
- e. Have a clean-up plan.

4

EVALUATE

- a. Will you be having participant evaluations?
- b. Team debriefing
- c. Thank all volunteers and sponsors.
- d. Document your recommendations.



Planning a big event such as a community fair or a benefit concert may seem like a very daunting task. By breaking the big task down into smaller pieces, it becomes a manageable challenge.

SAMPLE EVENT TIMELINE

When	What	Who
6 weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create your goals and objectives. • Brainstorm possible events that would achieve your goal. • Establish any partnerships with other groups/ organizations that may help. • Assess what you will need and what you have (supplies, people-power, promotion, etc.). • Make a list of businesses you want to approach for donations, services or anything else. • Check in with your team. 	
5 weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach businesses for donations. • Prepare promotional materials and develop a promotional plan. • Recruit volunteers that will be required. • Recruit any guest speakers you want to have. • Research and book a venue for the event. • Book any other services or supplies that you will need (sound equipment, outdoor tent, etc.) • Contact media to invite them to the event, or write an article yourself for publication. • Check in with your team. 	
4 weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out promotional materials to target audience. • Develop a tentative agenda. • Purchase necessary materials. • Check in with your team. 	
3 weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign volunteer tasks and roles for event-day. • Train volunteers. • Continue promotion. • Check in with your team. 	
2 weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm agenda. • Check in with all guest speakers, external matters (venue, rentals). • Continue promotion. • Check in with your team. 	
1 week before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address any last minute details that have been forgotten. • Continue promotion and remind any media contacts. • Check in with your team. 	
Week of event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure everyone knows their roles, communicates with one another, and is prepared. • Continuously check in with your team. 	
Week after event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send thank you notes to volunteers, sponsors or anyone who helped. • Follow up with participants to get feedback. • Write up recommendations for next time. • Feel good and proud: celebrate! 	

PROJECT PLANNING SHEET

GOAL: What do I hope to achieve? (This can be a broader statement.)		
OBJECTIVES/VISION:		
Why? Reason(s) for people to come to the event		
Who? Audience		
What? Specific goals like \$ raised		
Where? Venue		
When?		
RESOURCES THAT I HAVE		
Self qualities, skills		
Community		
Materials		
RESOURCES THAT I NEED		
Self qualities, skills		
Community		
Materials		
TO-DO LIST		
Promotions	Logistics	Post Event
GOAL SUMMARY		
I am going to [insert summary of objectives] with the help of [insert main resources] by [insert summary of to-do list]. I am ready to take action!		

FUND- RAISING

One effective way to take action for children in armed conflict is to support an existing organization through fundraising and getting others informed about the issues.

The fundamentals of good fundraising are not complicated, and with commitment and energy, you can be very successful.

Set your goals

- Make sure you have clearly defined goals that everyone involved feels are achievable.
- It is never a bad idea to start small and then go big later.

Plan ahead

- Making sure preparations (creating advertisements etc.) are made well in advance will reduce stress and increase your chances for success.

Appear Professional

- This will increase your credibility, your message and your donations.

Provide information about your cause

- People like to support a cause that they can understand and relate to.
- Make sure all volunteers are well trained to answer questions from the public and the media.

Look for support

- Approach the staff at your school, members of your community, businesses, even local politicians to find out how they may be able to help you.
- Remember to secure permission for your activity from whomever you think it may concern.

Timing

- Schedule your fundraisers with enough time between each other so they do not become repetitive and easily ignored.
- Avoid holding a fundraiser near the time of another group's event, especially if they involve similar activities.

Cost

- Keep costs to a minimum. The more money you spend on your event, the less you can donate.
- Attempt to get donations as much as possible (for venues, food, speakers etc.)

Learn from the experience

- Even if the event is not as successful as you had hoped, stay positive; use what worked and change what did not.

Provide a call to action

- Remember to include an action for people to take, such as a website with more information, or a place where they can make a donation.



You can learn more skills and perspectives to help you in organizing events through the Canadian Red Cross Youth TAP (Training - Action - Power) workshops such as:

- Events 101: Planning for Success
- Using the Media: Getting Your Voice Heard
- Working Effectively in Groups: Building Real Consensus

Contact your local Canadian Red Cross to gain access to these workshops.



What do we do with this money?

The final component to a successful fundraiser is deciding where you want to direct the money you raise. There are a variety of options. The Canadian Red Cross is always in need of donations to support the rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict. The CAR program in Liberia is one example of this. Funds raised will help provide ongoing support to all areas of the program. For more information, please visit: redcross.ca

FUND- RAISING IDEAS

1. CANDY GRAMS
2. BATTLE OF THE BANDS
3. RESTAURANT NIGHT

1 Candy Grams

Event Summary:

Set up a candy grams delivery service for your school to raise both money and awareness. Students can either buy packages of candy for themselves or send it to anyone in the school. Each candy gram contains a variety of candies and could also include a card with a fact about child soldiers/mines, cluster munitions, IHL and an action to take. You may also wish to include a card on which your customer can write their own message. Having a certain colour of candy which ties into your theme is a good idea. This would work well around specific holidays e.g. Halloween, Christmas.

Human Resources:

Advertising, sales, delivery, supplies shopping, creation

Potential Problems:

Insufficient advertising, overstock

Tips for Success:

Pricing

Make sure the price you set covers cost and allows you to make a profit, without driving away your customers. Ask your friends if the price is acceptable.

Decoration

Create an attractive package that will draw customer attention.

Display table

At the vending table, set up some displays and posters with facts, case studies and any other available outreach materials to help increase awareness.

Beware of overstocking

It is usually better to find out that your fundraiser is more successful than you expected and run out of stock, rather than having overstock that you can't sell.



To get additional facts to include in your candy grams, visit the websites listed in our [Resources Section](#) on page 39.

2 Battle of the Bands

Event Summary:

Host a night of music with local performers at the school theatre or local venue. This project requires extensive planning but can generate impressive funds and awareness.

Human Resources:

Advertising, event set-up, event planning, event running, ticket sales, thank-you committee, donations, media, band liaison, volunteer coordination, event MC, security, clean-up, supplies purchasing

Potential Problems:

Insufficient advertising, crowd control, poor coordination, high cost/risk, lack of support from school administration

Tips for Success:

Choose your date and time carefully to encourage a large audience, and determine an appropriate price for the tickets, taking care not to under value or over value your product.

Venue

- A good venue should be accessible and appropriate for the event. Holding a battle of the bands at a senior's centre may not be the most appropriate, for instance.
- When booking a community venue, you must factor in the cost. Schools generally provide their theatres free of charge.
- After the venue is booked, confirm your booking regularly and five days before your event.

Performers

- Recruit local bands to perform at your event. They are always looking for performance opportunities.
- If you would like to have a “star appearance,” be sure to write to the performer’s agent at least two months in advance, and perhaps even sooner.
- Confirm with all performers regularly and five days before the event.
- Be sure to provide the performers with their schedule and description of the event.

Light and sound

- Ask your school’s music and drama departments to help with light and sound.
- Light and sound is also available professionally. Look in your phone book for these companies. Be sure to negotiate a donation or at least a discount.

Donations

Request an operational fund from schools and banks, as you will need to pay for expenses when planning this event. Note that anything you spend is a liability, if you do not raise enough money at the event.

- Request door prizes from local retailers.
- Be sure to offer them advertising opportunities in return.
- Have a “thank-you” poster at the event, or include them on your advertisements

3 Restaurant Night

Event Summary:

Negotiate with a local restaurant to host a fundraising night, where a portion of the profit made during a specified time will be donated to your fundraiser. Many restaurants offer this service. However, most of these restaurants will donate the proceeds only when the customer mentions the name of your group. Therefore, advertising is of utmost importance.

Human Resources:

Advertising, negotiate with restaurant

Potential Problems

Insufficient advertising, finding the sponsoring restaurant

Tips for Success

- Look in your phonebook for some reputable restaurants.
- Write personalized letters on school letterhead to each of these restaurants explaining what your group is about, what you are fundraising for, what you would like them to do for you, and how you will thank them.
- Go to the restaurant in person and present the manager with your request.
- Be sure to get a written deal from management in order to avoid confusion.

Advertising

- See “Battle of the Bands” section for advertising ideas.
- You may wish to have club members distribute flyers to people’s mailboxes in your community to increase publicity.

For Restaurant Night, advertising is of utmost importance.



Battle of the Bands requires extensive planning but can generate impressive funds and awareness.

ACTIVITIES TO RAISE AWARENESS

1

Film Screening

Event Summary:

This is a great way to raise awareness in a meaningful way. Host a movie night at your school's theatre and show a film involving [child soldiers](#).

Tips for Success:

Choice of film

Look online for other great films. Be sure to watch the entire film to determine appropriateness before showing. Example of film: War/Dance

Add a fundraiser

Sell a specific symbol (ribbons) which ties into your cause.

Debriefing

Have an MC who relates the film to current situations and discusses what can be done.

Taking action

Set up a table with more information available, such as posters and case studies.

2

Posters

Event Summary:

Putting up posters is an effective way to spread awareness or advertise for a fundraiser.

Tips for Success:

What to put on the poster

- Statistics, ways to take action, upcoming fundraiser, etc.
- Attractive posters with pictures draw more attention.

Location

- Washrooms, vending machines, bulletin board, designated hallway...
- Be sure to check with your school regarding where you can put up posters.

3

Pick-up Stats

Event Summary:

Often people don't respond well to large campaigns because they cannot relate to the issue. A good way to change that is to provide a way for people to relate to the statistics.


Create a flyer with one side that catches attention. It could be in the shape of a landmine or feature a graphic or noticeable image, while the other side states facts such as "Bomblets from [cluster munitions](#) can be dispersed in an area up to 30,000 squared meters."

Tips for Success:

Remember to suggest a follow-up action by, for example, providing a website with more information or a place where they can make a donation.

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Remember to suggest a follow-up action by, for example, providing a website with more information or a place where they can make a donation.



TAKE OUR CHALLENGE

CHILDREN AND WAR (CAW) YOUTH CHALLENGE

The Canadian Red Cross Children and War (CAW) campaign is challenging **YOU** to take action and lend your voice to the thousands of children who are in danger from armed conflicts! This toolkit provides all the tools necessary to spread awareness, raise money and make a difference.

- Put on your **own event** to raise awareness within your community.
- **Raise money** through a fundraiser to help alleviate the suffering faced by children affected by conflict around the world.
- Let us know what you have been up to! Complete the form on the next page and send it to the address at the back of the toolkit.

CAW CHALLENGE SUBMISSION FORM

Children and War
Toolkit

NAME OF INDIVIDUALS OR GROUP (WITH GROUP LEADER)

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

CONTACT E-MAIL ADDRESS

SCHOOL NAME

EVENT TITLE

AMOUNT OF MONEY RAISED (APPROX.)

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES/PARTICIPANTS/PEOPLE REACHED

WILL THIS EVENT CONTINUE IN FUTURE YEARS?

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

On Children in Conflict

[Children in War Resources](#)

[Children in War Toolkit](#)

[Video Spot on Children in War, ICRC](#)

[Office of the Special representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)

[Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, Machel Studies](#)

On Child Soldiers

[Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers](#)

[Child Soldiers Resources for Schools, British Red Cross](#)

On Children as Victims of Landmines and Cluster Munitions

[Cluster Munitions, ICRC](#)

[Death in the Fields: a comic book report on cluster munitions, ICRC](#)

[ICRC Youtube Channel, Death in the Field cartoon](#)

[International Campaign to Ban Landmines](#)

International Humanitarian Law and Children

[Even Wars Have Limits, Canadian Red Cross](#)

[International Humanitarian Law, Canadian Red Cross](#)

[Exploring Humanitarian Law, ICRC](#)

[Convention on the Rights of the Child, ICRC](#)

[Summary table of IHL provisions specifically applicable to Children, ICC](#)

[Taking action on behalf of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF](#)

[Cartoons on the Rights of Children, UNICEF](#)

On Refugees, IDPs and Asylum-Seekers

[Displaced Children, UNICEF](#)

[Refugee Children, UNHCR](#)

Other Resources

[War and International Humanitarian Law, ICRC](#)

[ICRC Youtube Channel](#)

References

¹ Geneva Convention (I –IV)

² Additional Protocols (I –III)

³ Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 23

⁴ Additional Protocol I, Article 70

⁵ Additional Protocol I, Article 78

⁶ Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 24 and 50

⁷ Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 68

⁸ Additional Protocol 1, Article 77

⁹ Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 89

¹⁰ Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 50

¹¹ Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 82

¹² Coalition to stop the use of child soldiers:
<http://www.child-soldiers.org/childsoldiers/some-facts>

¹³ ICRC Children in War 2009 Toolkit

¹⁴ UNHCR Global Trends 2010 (June 2011)

¹⁵ Parliament of Canada, Land Mines (1996, revised 2003)

¹⁶ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/liberia_19220.html

¹⁷ Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Experiences, Implications and Strategies for Reintegration

VOCABULARY

Accede/Accession

Accession is an act by which a State signifies its agreement to be legally bound by the terms of a particular treaty. It has the same legal effect as ratification but is not preceded by an act of signature.

Additional Protocols

Complements a treaty or body of international law. For example, the original Geneva Conventions of 1949 were supplemented by the two Additional Protocols in 1977, then a third Protocol was added in 2005.

Child soldier

Any person under the age of 15 (18 under the Optional Protocol) who is affiliated with an armed force, whether it be government or otherwise.

Cluster munitions

These bombs are comprised of many smaller bomblets and are designed to scatter explosives over a large area. However, many of the bomblets fail to explode and are left to kill or injure civilians long after a conflict has ended. For more information on the specific definition of cluster munitions please refer to Article 2 Section 2 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Convention

A convention is a formal agreement between States. The generic term convention is synonymous with the generic term treaty. Conventions are normally open for participation by the international community as a whole or by a large number of States. Usually the instruments negotiated under the support of an international organization are called conventions (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989).

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Sometimes referred to as the CRC, this international United Nations convention sets out basic rights for all persons under the age of 18. These include civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Explosive remnants of war

This term encompasses all unexploded artillery shells, hand grenades, mortars, cluster submunitions (bomblets), rockets and other explosive devices that remain after the end of an armed conflict. The presence of these weapons has serious consequences for civilians and their communities.

Gender

This term refers to the socially constructed roles, attitudes and behaviours that a culture or society believes is appropriate for men and women.

Geneva Conventions

Treaties signed in Geneva in 1949, which form the basis of modern international humanitarian law. They concern: wounded and sick of armed forces, prisoners of war and the civilian population.

International Armed Conflict

A conflict between the armed forces of at least two countries.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC is an independent, permanent court that tries persons accused of the most serious crimes of international concern, namely genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The ICC is based on a treaty, joined by more than 100 countries and growing.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

IHL is a set of rules that seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare. IHL is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict.

Internment

A person is interned when they are detained based on the possibility of him or her being a threat in the future.

Landmines

According to Article 2 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines, a mine is "designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person...that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons." Mines are usually buried in the ground, and it is important to keep in mind that mines cannot distinguish between civilians or military personnel, children or adults.

Non-international Armed Conflict

Also called internal conflict or civil war. Fighting on the territory of a State between the regular armed forces and identifiable armed groups, or between armed groups fighting one another.

Opposition Forces

Armed forces in opposition of those of a current government.

Optional Protocol

An additional legal instrument that is added to an existing treaty (i.e. the Convention on the Rights of a Child) and is labelled optional because it is not automatically binding to States that have agreed to the original treaty. It must be signed and ratified independently of the original agreement.

Paramilitary

A group of civilians organized in military fashion for the purpose of operating in place of existing army troops or for assisting them.

Ratify/Ratification

An act by which a State signifies an agreement to be legally bound by the terms of a particular treaty. To ratify a treaty, the State first signs it and then fulfills its own national legislative requirements. This means that the appropriate national organ of the country—Parliament, Senate, the Crown, Head of State or Government, or a combination of these—follows domestic constitutional procedures and makes a formal decision to be a party to the treaty. The instrument of ratification, a formal sealed letter referring to the decision and signed by the State's responsible authority, is then prepared and deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General in New York.

Sexual Violence

It is a means of warfare when used to torture, injure, extract information, degrade, intimidate and punish for actual or alleged deeds attributed to women or members of their family. It can happen to men or women and can include any unwanted sexual activities or rape.

Signature

An act by which a State provides a preliminary endorsement of the instrument. Signing does not create a binding legal obligation but does demonstrate the State's intent to examine the treaty domestically and consider ratifying it. While signing does not commit a State to ratification, it does oblige the State to refrain from acts that would defeat or undermine the treaty's objective and purpose.

State Party

A State Party to a treaty is a country that has ratified or acceded to that particular treaty and is, therefore, legally bound by the provisions in the instrument.

Stockpile

In terms of explosive weaponry, a stockpile refers to the supply of these weapons for future use.

Treaty

A treaty is a formally concluded and ratified agreement between States. The term is used generically to refer to instruments binding in international law and concluded between international entities (States or organizations). Under the Vienna Conventions on the Law of Treaties, a treaty must be (1) a binding instrument, which means that the contracting parties intended to create legal rights and duties; (2) concluded by States or international organizations with treaty-making power; (3) governed by international law; (4) in writing.

United Nations (UN)

Established in 1945, the UN is an international organization that seeks to bring the world's nations together to work for peace, security and economic development.

EVEN WARS
HAVE LIMITS

redcross.ca



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