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**Study on the Impact of
Armed Conflict
on Children**



**United Nations
Economic Commission
for Africa**

Graça Machel, Chairperson

**Statement of the First Regional
Consultation on the Impact of
Armed Conflict on Children**

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**Africa Hall
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
17-19 April 1995**

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III List of Participants

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I Introduction

The *Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* convened its first consultation at the regional level in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during 17-19 April 1995. The consultation provided a pivotal opportunity for African policy makers and practitioners, independent experts, eminent civil, religious and cultural figures, representatives of African and non-African NGOs, representatives of UN organizations and other observers to assess and constructively respond to the catastrophic conditions to which children have been and continue to be exposed, both as targets and perpetrators of the atrocities of war that have taken place in the region.

The first of two consultations in Africa, Addis Ababa meeting focused attention on the situation of children in countries in conflict and post conflict situations, as well as in countries that border conflict areas in the Horn, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. Participants focused specifically on the experiences of Angola, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire. Additional consultations will be held at the regional level over the course of the Study, in Asia, Latin America and Europe.

This publication contains the statement adopted at Addis Ababa consultation, a list of participants, the final programme and list of background papers and working documents of the consultation.

II Statement of the First Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children

A threat haunts African — a threat challenging the stability of civil society. Liberia, Somalia and Rwanda have shockingly exposed Africa's failure to resolve its conflicts and its humanitarian tragedies. A crisis of national identity, persistent social injustice and a lack of sustained democratic processes have combined to create these tragedies. Social injustice, partly a product of bad governance, results in ethnic tension. Political leaders who lose authority exploit these ethnic tensions to maintain power, leading to more conflict.

When armed conflicts occur, children and women are the principal victims. Children are killed, maimed, orphaned or separated from their families boys are forced to bear arms and commit violent acts themselves. Girls and women are exploited and sexually abused. It is children and women who suffer the most when schools are closed, clinics destroyed, fields sown with landmines, and markets virtually bereft of goods. Those who survive the killing fields may die later for lack of food, water or basic medicines. Those who survive even this — but witness killing, maiming, burning and looting or experience lengthy separations from their families — may be traumatized for years to come.

Too many of Africa's children and women have experienced the horrors of total war, where combatants use weapons indiscriminately to terrorize civilians, impose their will and achieved their selfish ends, where accidental distinctions of race, class, or ethnicity are cynically manipulated to determine who will live and who will die. In some of these wars, neutrality is not an option. Every man, woman and child is forced to take a side; every man, woman and child is assigned to a particular group — to be protected or to be destroyed. Youth, age, and disability are no defense. Every

person is equally at risk and equally terrorized. This nightmarish terror, more than any other force, has transformed the lives of African children and women.

Recognizing that this terror exists — not only in Africa but elsewhere in the world as well — the United Nations General Assembly in December 1993 unanimously called on the Secretary General to appoint an expert to conduct a study on the impact of armed conflict on children. The Secretary-General appointed Ms. Graca Machel, former first lady and minister of education in Mozambique, to conduct the study. The following remarks are some of the reflections of participants meeting in Addis Ababa at the first of six planned regional consultations for this study. The participants, who attended the consultation in their personal capacities, came from 15 countries in eastern, central and southern Africa as well as other African countries. Many participants are associated with NGOs, the United Nations, and other African, international and intergovernmental organizations. Eleven of the 15 countries represented are now undergoing armed conflict or post-conflict reconstruction. Others border countries experiencing conflict and are struggling both to protect refugees and to attract sufficient assistance to support development, relief and rehabilitation.

Of course, not every African country has experienced the widespread destruction seen most recently in Rwanda. These recent catastrophes have obscured several positive developments across Africa, including the spread of meaningful democracy, increased respect for human rights, and remarkable successes in conflict resolution. In particular, southern African countries have recently taken responsibility for conflict situations in their midst and west African countries, through the monitoring observer group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOMAG), have successfully deployed African peacekeepers in the wounded country of Liberia. In addition, recent peacemaking initiatives from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) are welcome and worthy of support.

Reflecting on recent armed conflicts in Africa, participants in the consultation affirmed their respect for sovereignty, but noted too that sovereignty implies a responsibility to protect the rights of the people. It was observed that, in those cases where governments are unable or unwilling to protect the rights of their people, sovereignty should not be invoked to prevent the international community from protecting the rights or meeting the needs of children and other victims of conflict.

Participants also affirmed the responsibility of African governments and the international community to protect children everywhere from the impact of armed conflict. They observed that total war – where most of the casualties are children and women – runs contrary to all basic human values and to all international standards aiming to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict, such as the Geneva Conventions on the and their Additional Protocols and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The participants noted an urgent need to renew basic human values and to enforce international standards which, through ignorance or wilful disregard, are too often flouted. They also stated that international standards should be strengthened to clarify the humanitarian responsibilities of all parties to a conflict and to address situations not clearly foreseen when they were initially drafted.

Participants emphasized the critical advocacy role which schools and the media could play in renewing basic values and in reducing the number and severity of armed conflicts. Some participants stated that the media often inflamed, but rarely tried to extinguish, controversies that might lead to armed conflict. Other participants noted that continued schooling – especially when some classes focus on basic human rights and values – helps to stabilize local communities, to normalize the lives of school-going children and their families, and to protect children from the possible irrevocable loss of their hopes and aspirations.

Reflecting on international responses to Africa's armed conflicts, some participants expressed disappointment in the role of the United Nations. That disappointment took several forms. It was felt that the United Nations on occasion intervened too late; that the United Nations when it did intervene was often confused about its mandate and limited in its resources; that United Nations forces did not always perform at the highest standards of conduct; and that the United Nations failed to address adequately the vexing dilemma of the limits of sovereignty, especially in extreme cases of gross violation of human rights. While participants acknowledged that these were very complex issues, influenced by the widely varying views of member states, they nonetheless felt that more must be expected of the United Nations and insisted that the Study address these issues in a thoughtful and searching way. In particular, it was pointed out that the United Nations should seek self-critically and constructively to examine its shortcomings and failures with a view to ensuring that the organization is fully relevant and effective. At the same time, other participants noted the indispensable and constructive role played by the United Nations in the transition to peace and democracy in Africa, particularly in South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Angola.

The participants noted that Africans and the international community must and can do better. They observed that children offer both the reason and the opportunity to take firm measures. In a world divided by race, language, politics and religion, children are a unifying force that brings all people together on a common ethical ground. The needs of all children are the same - nutritious food, adequate health care, a decent education, a secure and loving family, and a life of friendship and opportunity. Children's needs and aspirations cut across all ideologies. To secure these needs, some participants urged that all parties to a conflict be strongly encouraged to recognize children as a "zone of peace". This would impose on the parties an absolute obligation to protect children from the corrupting influences of war and militarization.

As part of their own efforts to protect the rights of children in armed conflicts, participants made the following recommendations, among others, knowing well the formidable constraints facing progress in Africa today:

Because wars have profound impact on civilians, especially children and women, Africans must unequivocally renounce armed conflict as a means for resolving social, economic and political problems by:

- Recognizing clearly, in light of the World Summit for Social Development, that the concept of human security should replace the traditional concept of military security;
- Persuading governments to reduce military spending and to redirect investment towards human security and human development;
- Strengthening mechanisms for achieving national reconciliation as well as conflict prevention and conflict resolution, especially by including eminent African women in peacekeeping efforts; and
- Persuading donors to recognize international obligations.

Africans must recognize their absolute obligation to prevent the involvement of children in situations of armed conflict. In this context, all warring parties must:

- Stop recruiting children or otherwise using children to achieve military objectives;
- Immediately demobilize child soldiers and, with assistance from the international community, achieve their rehabilitation and integration into normal life, primarily through resuming their education;
- Protect non-combatants, and especially children and women, in combat theatres; and
- Exclude agricultural land and traditional sanctuaries such as schools, hospitals, cultural and religious institutions from among military targets.

African countries and the international community must recognize their absolute obligations to protect and to meet the needs of children and women who are affected by armed conflict. In this context, African countries with the support of the international community must:

- Educate children about landmines, and in particular educate girls whose traditional labours (fetching water and firewood) expose them to a greater risk of injury from landmines;
- Normalize the child's environment, and where necessary promote physical and psychosocial recovery, through schooling, peer group activities and appropriate health measures from the child's own culture;
- Expand the concept of humanitarian assistance to include the protection of civilians and civilian institutions, and to recognize, as legitimate, assistance to all civilians on any side of a conflict;
- Provide access and all necessary assistance to refugees and to host populations and host countries that are heavily burdened by the refugees' presence in their midst;
- Enable families to resume primary responsibility to care for, protect and rehabilitate children affected by armed conflict;
- Limit the institutionalization of children and support family reunification programmes for children separated from their families;
- Ban arms and combatants from refugee camps and other sanctuaries;
- Protect girls and women from rape, abuse and other violence; and
- Secure due process for the early rehabilitation of child prisoners and child perpetrators of violence.

Africans and the international community must restore basic human values and standards where they have been compromised by:

- Rejuvenating a sense of personal responsibility and respect for human life;
- Providing peace education to children and adults (especially community and national leaders);
- Educating aid workers and peacekeepers about international standards such as the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to ensure that their activities accord with these standards; and
- Training human rights monitors and using truth commissions and war crimes trials to expose wrongdoing and to reinforce personal accountability.

Existing national and international standards protecting children in situations of armed conflict must be effectively strengthened and enforced. In this context, all African countries should start to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child by translating it into national law and creating credible structures to enforce it. In addition, all parties to a conflict — governmental and non-governmental — must:

- Be encouraged formally to declare that they consider themselves bound by, and will respect and ensure respect for, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and other international instruments relating to the rights, welfare and protection of children, particularly in situations of armed conflict;
- Educate persons about the content of these documents, e.g. by simplified restatement, translation into local languages, and widespread dissemination;
- Create credible structures for punishing violators of these standards;
- Call for a United Nations declaration based on the principle of children as a "zone of peace" that would allow humanitarian assistance to safeguard the interests of children through, e.g. "corridors of peace" and "days of tranquillity";

- Make judicious use of the principle of humanitarian intervention in situations where the state is no longer willing or able to prevent grotesque abuses of human rights;
- Support the project of drafting an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise the age of recruitment to armed forces;
- Implement the recommendations of the April 1992 Humanitarian Summit, which recognized the access rights of civilians in war and the need for schools and protective zones for civilian populations during war; and
- Make better use of the media, NGOs, the OAU, the United Nations bodies, the International Court of Justice and similar forums, to expose and monitor human rights abuses and to influence public opinion.

Political accountability needs to be vigorously promoted and observed by:

- Clarifying who is accountable for any action undertaken and establishing mechanisms to ensure accountability, especially for those who violate the rights of children; and
- Establishing transparent processes empowering people, especially children and women, to participate in political decisions and to play an active role in conflict prevention and management.

African countries should strengthen efforts to seek collective solutions to their problems by:

- Accepting primary responsibility in responding to future peacekeeping needs in Africa, with appropriate support from the international community;
- Strengthening their capacities to perform peacekeeping functions in addition to deploying peacekeeping soldiers (where African countries already play a significant role);

- Making full and effective use of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and other existing subregional forums for cooperation in Africa;
- Collecting and reflecting on the lessons learned in subregional peacekeeping efforts; and
- Harmonizing efforts to facilitate humanitarian intervention and peaceful neighbourly cooperation, chiefly through involving civic leaders, NGOs, professional bodies, cultural and religious organizations, and others in conflict prevention and resolution.

Significant progress must be made to reduce arms shipments to Africa and arms trade within Africa by:

- Banning the shipment of arms (including landmines) to all parties to any armed conflict and creating mechanisms to enforce the ban;
- Banning the production, sale and use of landmines and creating an international supervisory body to monitor the ban;
- Challenging government spending for military purposes in the meetings of the OAU, the United Nations and other forums;
- Encouraging the flow of additional external financing to governments who pledge to spend these funds for non-military purposes; and
- Making determined efforts to assist African countries in the removal of landmines.

Annex I

Programme of the Consultation

Monday, 17 April

09:00 - 10:30 Registration

10:30 - 11:30 Opening Session

Welcoming Remarks

- Mr. Makha D. Sarr
Acting Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Africa
- Mr. Stephen Lewis
Special Representative of the
Executive Director UNICEF
- Ambassador Ahmed Haggag
Assistant Secretary-General
Organization of African Unity

Address

- Ms. Graça Machel,
Chairperson
Study on the Impact of Armed
Conflict on Children
(Mozambique)

Opening Statement by:

- H.E. Dr. Duri Mohammed
Minister of Planning and Economic
Development of the Transitional
Government of Ethiopia

11:30 - 11:45	Break
11:45 - 12:15	The Impact of Armed Conflict: Children's Voices
12:15 - 12:30	Introductory Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Olara Otunnu President, International Peace Academy Chairperson of the Consultation
12:30 - 14:30	Lunch Break
14:30 - 18:00	Opening Plenary - The Context: Regional Patterns and Characteristics of Conflicts
	Chair: Mr. Olara Otunnu, President, International Peace Academy
	Discussants:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ms. Specioza Wandira-Kazibwe Vice-President and Minister for Gender & Community Development (Uganda) 2 Mr. Sadig Rasheed (ECA) 3 Mr. Thomas Hammarberg Committee on the Rights of the Child (Sweden)
18:00 - 20:00	Reception hosted by the Economic Commission for Africa (Ethiopia Hall, first floor, ECA's new building)

Tuesday, 18 April

09:00 - 18:00 **Concurrent Working Groups**

Schedule

09:00 - 11:00 Panel Presentation

11:00 - 11:15 **Break**

11:15 - 13:00 Working Group Discussion

13:00 - 14:30 **Lunch Break**

14:30 - 16:00 Draft Recommendations for Action

16:00 - 16:15 **Break**

16:15 - 18:00 Adoption of Working Group Report

Concurrent Working Groups

Working Group 1: The Protection of Children affected by Situations of Armed Conflicts

Chair: Ms. Gayle Smith
Advisor to Chief of Staff,
USAID Horn of Africa Initiative

Discussants:

- 1 Ms. Aloyise Inyumba,
Minister of Family & Promotion of
Women (Rwanda)
- 2 Dr. Cesar de Sousa
Ministry of Health
(Mozambique)

- 3 Rev. Burgess Carr, ICVA
- 4 Mr. Abdul Mohammed
Inter-Africa Group/UNICEF

Working Group 2: The Promotion of Physical and Psychological Recovery and Social Reintegration

Chair: Mr. Ben Turok
Reconstruction &
Development Programme
(South Africa)

Discussants:

- 1 Ms. Miriam Matembe
Member of Parliament
(Uganda)
- 2 Mr. Filipe Mandlate
Deputy Minister, Social
Welfare (Mozambique)
- 3 Ms. Hirut Tefferi
Radda Barnen, Kenya
- 4 Ms. Assumpta Naniwe
Professor of Psychology
(Burundi)

Working Group 3: Human Values, and the Adoption, Implementation and Promotion of Standards

Chair: Mr. Francis Deng
Special Representative
of the UN Secretary-General for
Internally Displaced Persons

Discussants:

- 1 Mr. Paulo Tjipilica
Minister of Justice (Angola)
- 2 Ms. Priscilla Jana
Ministry of Justice
Member of Parliament
(South Africa)
- 3 Mr. Dominique Gross
Chief Delegate, ICRC
Ethiopia

Wednesday, 19 April

09:00 - 11:00 **Second Plenary - Reports from Working Groups**

Chair: Mr. Stephen Lewis
Special Representative of the
Executive Director, UNICEF

Presentation of Working Group Reports:

- Ms. Gayle Smith
- Mr. Ben Turok
- Mr. Francis Deng

11:00 - 11:15 **Break**

11:15 - 13:00 **Adoption of Recommendations and Report**

13:00 - 15:00 **Lunch Break**

16:00 - 17:30

Closing Session

- 1 Mr. Olara Otunnu
President
International Peace Academy
- 2 Ms. Graça Machel
Chairperson
Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict
on Children

18:00 - 19:00

Press Conference

Annex II

List of Documents

Working Documents of the Regional Consultation

- Human Values and the Adoption, Promotion and Implementation of Standards: A Preliminary Review of Some of the Issues,
Stuart Maslen, Research Officer, Machel Study
- Patterns and Characteristics of Conflicts: A Preliminary Review of Some of the Issues,
Guy S. Goodwin-gill, Editor-In-Chief, International Journal of Refugee Law France
- The Promotion of Physical and Psychological Recovery and Social Reintegration: A Preliminary Review of Some of the Issues,
Margaret McCallin, Director, Refugees Children's Programme International Catholic Child Bureau
- Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict: A Preliminary Review of Some of the Issues,
Nigel Cantwell, Consultant, UNICEF, Geneva

Conference Room Documents

- Protection of Children in Situation of Armed Conflict Lesson from the Liberian Experience,
Canon Burgess Carr, Director of Humanitarian Affairs, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Geneva, (mimeo, 1995)

- Children in Armed Conflicts, One Example of Activities of the ICRC in Burundi, ICRC, (mimeo, 1995)
- Children of Mozambique: The Losers of War, *Abubacar Sultan, Maputo, Mozambique (mimeo, 1995)*
- Consultation Regionale su l'incidence des conflits armés sur les enfants, *Prof. Mangoni Tienabe, Psychologue Clinicien, Rep. du Zaïre (mimeo, 1995)*
- Evacuation of Children from Conflict Areas, Considerations and Guidelines, *Everett M. Ressler, UNHCR and UNICEF, Geneva, 1992*
- From Conflict to Concord: Regional Cooperation in the Horn of Africa, Final Communiqué, *PHSD/ECA and United States Institute of Peace, Addis Ababa, 1993*
- Report of the Symposium on Interface, Dialogue and Cooperation between Government and NGOs for Popular Participation in National Reconstruction and Development, *PHSD/ECA and Africa Humanitarian Action, Addis Ababa, (mimeo, 1995)*
- The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: The Case of Uganda, *Ms. Naomi Mutegaya, Save the Children Fund (UK), Uganda (mimeo, 1995)*
- The Impact of War on Children: The Case of Mozambique, *Ministry for Coordination of Social Action, Maputo, Mozambique*

- Protection of Children in International Humanitarian Law, Extract from International Review of the Red Cross, May-June 1994,
Denise Plattner
- Protection of Children in Refugee Emergencies: The Importance of Early Social Work Intervention - The Rwanda Experience,
Radda Barnen, Swedish Save the Children, Stockholm, 1995
- Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care,
UNHCR, Geneva, 1994
- Protection of Children in Situation of Armed Conflict,
Inyumba Alosea, Minister of Family and Women in Development, Rwanda, (mimeo, 1995)
- Safe Havens for Children During Armed Conflicts,
United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme, Africa, Addis Ababa, (mimeo, 1995)
- Socioeconomic Impact of Landmines in Mozambique,
Dr. Cesar Palha de Sousa, Ministry of Health, Mozambique (mimeo, 1995)
- Basic Needs for Healthy Development: Family and Social Effects and Interactions,
WHO, Expert Committee on Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning in the 1990s and Beyond, 1993, M. Manclaux
- Children Deprived of Childhood,
WHO, Expert Committee on Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning in the 1990s and Beyond, 1993, M. Maclaux

- Children of War Initiative Program,
Graeme Irvine, President, WVI, World Vision International Africa Region (mimeo, 1995)
- Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation: Policy Issues Related to Women and Children,
WHO, Expert Committee on Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning In the 1990s and Beyond, 1993, Debarati G. Sapr
- The Organization of African Unity and Conflict Management in Africa: An International Peace Academy Report,
Ian Johnstone and Tandeka Nkhwane, New York, 1993
- The OAU and Conflict Management in Africa, Chairmen's Report of Joint OAU/IPA Consultation,
All A. Mazrui, Olara A. Otunnu and Salim A. Salim, International Peace Academy, New York, 1994
- Africa's Internal Conflicts: The Search for Response An International Peace Academy Report,
Dent Ocaya-Lakidi, International Peace Academy, New York, 1994
- The Phenomenon of Traumatism Among Children during the Present Crisis in Burundi: Its Importance and Consequences Among Unaccompanied Children in Particular, UNICEF (mimeo, 1995),
Dr. Assumpta Naniwe, University of Burundi, UNICEF Consultant

Background Documents/Handouts

- Captured Child Combatants, Extract from the International Review of the Red Cross, (September - October, 1990),
Maria Teresa Dutli

- Children and War, Special Brochure, ICRC, 1994,
Mrs. Justine Nkurunziza
- Help us find our families: Rwanda, Unaccompanied Children, ICRC (Brochure) 1995
- Prevention/Dissemination: Recent ICRC Experience, ICRC DDM/CODE-RBA/NN, 1994
- Situational Analysis of Kwazulu-Natal Region of South Africa and a Suggested Community-Based Model of Intervention, (mimeo, 1995),
Craig Higson-Smith
- Unaccompanied Children in Armed Conflicts, ICRC (mimeo, 1994),
Ms. Sophie Martin, and Ms. Marfa Teresa Dultl
- African Women for Conflict Resolution and Peace: A Project of UNIFEM/AFWIC
- Protocol for the Study of Interpersonal Physical Abuse of Children,
WHO, 1994
- Résolution sur l'Engagement de la 39ème session de la Commission de la condition de la femme (New York - 15 mars/4 a avril 1995) and Déclaration de la Conférence francophone préparatoire (Dakar - novembre 1994),
Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique, Paris, 1995
- Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options, OAU, Addis Ababa, 1994
- Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children Background Paper
FAO (mimeo)

Annex III

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