

# **The impact of neglected emergencies**

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on children







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a special report

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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities world-wide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. As followers of Jesus, World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World Vision works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice.

World Vision recognises that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty.

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# part one

## neglected emergencies: difficult to define, impossible to ignore

Not all emergencies receive a timely response with adequate resources and measures that lead to effective outcomes. We might hope that all responses bring about a transition from emergency relief to development, with prevailing law and order and, not least of all, an equally good or better quality of life for children. But the fact is that some emergencies descend to the realm of obscurity where hope for lasting solutions seems increasingly distant. These circumstances are often referred to as neglected emergencies.

The pundits argue that without addressing the causes of a neglected emergency, the demand for humanitarian aid will persist. This paper concentrates on the impact of neglected emergency on children's lives, particularly in areas of education, health and protection.

Drawing on the experiences of children and their wider communities, including specific ethnic groups and groups of people displaced as a result of a crisis, this study makes a case that the impact can be so profound that it weakens the chances of finding solutions. Children in such situations inherit and pass on a legacy steeped in deprivation and abuse.

These emergencies – and these children – require a response that is sensitive to their predicament. It therefore follows that in understanding the unique and profound effects on children, we must then recognise that a humanitarian response is only as good as its ability to break this cycle of deprivation.

### what is a neglected emergency?

It is difficult to define the criteria that causes one crisis to become “neglected” while another remains (simply) a crisis. Neglected emergencies can begin as natural disasters where the poorest are most affected, and then the economy is

unable to recover from the impact of the disaster; such is the case with Lesotho, a country that has endured extreme weather conditions including recurrent droughts. Other neglected emergencies are the result of conflicts dating back several generations, as is the case with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chechnya and Colombia. Some are comparatively new and even more devastating as they affect and fragment the entire population of a country, such as the war in Iraq which led to the flight of Iraqis to Jordan. Still others can be the result of longstanding discrimination based on race, ethnicity or religion, which is the plight of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh who came from Myanmar.

There are varying definitions of a neglected emergency. For instance, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and UNICEF define it based on a causal analysis of contributing factors such as under-funding, low humanitarian capacity, low visibility and media coverage, or lack of political will.<sup>1</sup>

The European Commission, through ECHO, defines neglected emergencies as “serious humanitarian crisis situations where the people are not receiving enough international aid or even none at all”.<sup>2</sup>

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in its 2006 *World disaster report on neglected emergencies*, suggested that there are many types of neglected emergencies and that the same types can be both the cause and effect of a crisis.<sup>3</sup> They define neglected emergencies by a longer typology than IASC with six indices: the degree to which a crisis is under-reported, under-funded, uncounted, secondary, secret, awkward and misunderstood.

While these variations in definitions continue to be debated, one thing is clear: some quarters of the international community feel an obligation to address neglected emergencies.



ECHO designed a complex set of indicators and tools to determine funding for a small number of these emergencies.<sup>4</sup> UNICEF has turned its attention to strengthening its management response to emergencies and, while stepping away from the “neglected emergencies” terminology, addresses forgotten emergencies among its “priority countries”.

Although World Vision has not adopted a set of criteria for defining neglected emergencies, we are present in several situations widely regarded as such. World Vision understands neglected emergencies very well from an operational perspective: the lack of resources; piecemeal, short-term funding; inappropriate donor conditionalities; and unsuccessful transitioning. While there is a broad consensus within the organisation that neglected emergencies ought to be addressed, as a child-focused organisation we recognise that there is little conclusive information on how children are affected within neglected emergency situations.

This research seeks to understand the degree to which neglected emergencies affect the well-being of children. The hope is that through a deeper understanding of the contributing factors that threaten children’s survival, we will be better prepared and motivated to address neglected emergencies and champion the needs of children suffering in these situations.

## methodology

The initial hypothesis for this research was that a child’s survival is worse in neglected emergencies (using conditions of health, education and protection as indicators for survival). It implies that the threat to children’s survival in other circumstances, while serious, is not proportionally as great as in a neglected emergency situation.

In any country-wide population, a certain percent falls below the mean in terms of access to essential services, such as health and education. With the exception of children living in low-income countries, extreme poverty usually affects the minority. On the other hand, in a neglected emergency the **majority** of children live in extreme danger and often extreme poverty.

The data sources for this research are several reliable and widely recognised authorities in their respective domains of child rights, health, education and/or protection. These sources include:

- United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations;

- reports from the UN Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons;
- UNICEF Household Economy Analysis (HEA) reports and Annual Reports;
- several reports by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Reports, including the Human Development Index (HDI);
- World Bank country reports;
- several Norwegian Refugee Council studies and reports;
- Human Rights Watch country and situation reports;
- International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports;
- ReliefWeb for Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) data; and
- World Vision research, including reports on Iraqi refugees in Jordan.<sup>5</sup>

To retain authenticity, these sources are quoted extensively, drawing for the most part on recent findings, covering the past five years. As the data is uncorroborated, it therefore cannot be defended by the writer; the reliability and verifiability of the data rests on the reputation of the sources.

## definition of terms

### children

The UN defines a “child” as any person below the age of 18 years and a “youth” as a person aged 15–24 years.<sup>6</sup> This research makes the distinction between a child and youth in some instances, but not all. Therefore, the term “children” may also refer to persons over 18 years.

“Child” or “children” generally refers to both genders. However, in the case of the shepherd boys in Lesotho, “child” or “children” may refer mainly to boys.

### emergency

The 2005 World Food Programme definition of emergencies is adopted for this research.

*...[E]mergencies are defined as urgent situations in which there is clear evidence that an event or series of events has occurred which causes human suffering or imminently threatens human lives or livelihoods and which the government concerned has not the means to remedy; and it is a demonstrably abnormal event or series of events which produces*

*dislocation in the life of a community on an exceptional scale.*

*The event or series of events may comprise one or a combination of the following:*

*a) sudden calamities such as earthquakes, floods, locust infestations and similar unforeseen disasters;*

*b) human-made emergencies resulting in an influx of refugees, or the internal displacement of populations, or in the suffering of otherwise affected populations;*

*c) food scarcity conditions owing to slow-onset events such as drought, crop failures, pests and diseases that result in an erosion of the capacity of communities and vulnerable populations to meet their food needs;*

*d) severe food access or availability conditions resulting from sudden economic shocks, market failure or economic collapse that result in an erosion of the capacity of communities and vulnerable populations to meet their food needs; and*

*e) a complex emergency for which the government of the affected country or the Secretary-General of the United Nations has requested the support of WFP.<sup>7</sup>*

### **neglected emergency**

In 2006, Dan Toole, UNICEF Director of Emergency Programmes, defined neglected (or forgotten) emergencies:

*Forgotten emergencies really is a euphemism. It's this idea that there are some places that we forget about. A better term is "neglected emergencies" because donors and others chose to fund emergencies and they forget or neglect others ... there are a few very high profile emergencies that get a tremendous amount of money and then a large number of*

*smaller but equally important emergencies that get very little funding, and a few places get almost no funding. We are really talking about those countries that are forgotten or even neglected by the community that funds humanitarian operations.<sup>8</sup>*

Although there is no universally accepted definition for neglected emergencies, this research applies Toole's explanation. Therefore, patterns in donor funding are highlighted as an indication of neglect.

### **survival**

Conditions of protection, health and education are the indicators for survival.

The analysis of "protection" in this paper is based on Save the Children's definition of child protection in emergencies: measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children.<sup>9</sup> The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* is a pivotal legal basis for protection. At the programme level, child protection aims to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse against children. This is the intention of organisations such as UNICEF that work on child protection in both emergency and non-emergency settings.

For the purposes of this research, "health" primarily covers mortality rates and nutritional levels of children and the wider population. The Millennium Development Goals on health are also taken into account.

The "education" indicator includes UNDP figures on the literacy level of persons 15 years and over, enrolment figures for primary-level education, and figures for those attaining fifth-grade education.



## part two

# some neglected emergencies: country and community contexts

While neglected emergencies can be found world-wide, the examples chosen for this paper were selected in the main because World Vision provided or provides humanitarian support to the affected populations.

Today some of these situations are no longer regarded as emergencies, nonetheless the experiences serve to provide important lessons on the impact of NE on children. They also serve to deepen World Vision's understanding of the issues not only from a humanitarian response perspective, but also with regard to advocacy. The examples are located in countries at various levels of development, and highlight that while funding is important much more is needed to address NE.

## displaced children in Colombia

### background

Colombia has been embroiled in internal conflict since the late 1940s, largely due to inequality and poverty, and further fuelled by drug trafficking. The children who are most affected by the conflict live in rural areas, which are primarily populated by indigenous peoples and Colombians of African descent.

An estimated 2–3 million people have been displaced by the conflict, forced to leave their places of origin to find refuge in other locations: the urban centres of Colombia or of other countries altogether, such as Ecuador and Venezuela. Sadly, half of this displaced population are children.<sup>10</sup>

Colombia's internally displaced persons (IDPs) – including these children – bear the hallmarks of the neglected population in crisis: no or inadequate access to basic services including education, fragile family structures, high levels of insecurity and malnutrition. Added to this, the ongoing conflict shows no signs of cessation.

### the scope and nature of neglected emergency in Colombia

In his 2007 report to the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons, Walter

Kälin, urged donors to acknowledge that the displacement problem in Colombia is of such a magnitude that a resolution surpasses even the economic capabilities of a well-developed country, and is certainly beyond the economic capacities of Colombia.<sup>11</sup>

That same year, UNICEF reported that it received no emergency funding in its appeal for Colombia, despite revising its US\$5 million budget downward to just \$1.3 million.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) revealed marked increases in humanitarian funding between 2000 and 2007, starting with nearly \$371,000 in 2000 and rising to over \$42 million in 2007.<sup>13</sup> However, it is worth noting two significant factors in this increased funding. The OCHA increases have been largely due to natural disasters, mainly hurricanes, rather than the protracted conflict. And although UNICEF's funding (which decreased) is specifically targeted to children and is especially relevant to this study, OCHA's funding (which increased) may or may not directly benefit children.

While Kälin's report acknowledged the improvement in humanitarian response, his earlier study highlighted the limits of international involvement and the important role of government in the crisis.

*One of the reasons for the limited [international] presence is that the Government's readiness to invite*

*international involvement could risk abrogation by the State of its responsibilities towards its displaced population. Indeed, a number of authorities, at different levels, when asked about what needed to be done often deflected the onus for action onto the international community. Clearly a balance is needed between the role of the international community, which is vital, and the need to ensure that Colombia – a country with a high level of human and resource capacity – does not transfer to the international community the responsibilities that it has the duty and ability to discharge.*<sup>14</sup>

Despite improvements in funding and other resources, it does not appear that IDPs reap the benefits. Kälín's 2007 report revealed a clear gap between the policies in the capital Bogotá and the operational implementation at the departmental and municipal levels, which affected the capacities of IDPs to effectively exercise their rights.<sup>15</sup>

An independent assessment of IDPs by the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 2005 also found that, despite an increased response, assistance fell short when meeting the needs of displaced persons.

*While international and national agencies supplement government resources, all official assistance was targeted only towards the registered population. It was estimated that all State aid earmarked for IDPs reaches only 17% of that population. One of the reasons for low levels of assistance, apart from issues relating to registration, is that IDPs were not always aware of their rights, entitlements and obligations.*<sup>16</sup>

The displaced population of Colombia represent an NE that requires the attention of the national government and beyond, and the scale of this emergency demands complementary international involvement. Added to this, it is essential that the ineffective implementation of aid is improved, as the current weak delivery system means that funding often does not reach those in need.

### **Colombia's Human Development Index and the effect on children**

Colombia's overall child protection record is better than many countries, with very low rates of child labour and child marriages and a 90% birth registration rate.<sup>17</sup> According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP),

Colombia has a Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of 80 out of 179 countries; life expectancy at birth is 72.3 years and the adult literacy rate is 92.8%.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of education, reports are also quite good. The literacy rate among 15–24 year olds is 98%, the primary school enrolment rate is 87%, and the secondary school enrolment rate is over 50%, with the overall female enrolment rate slightly higher than that of males.<sup>19</sup>

Figures in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) standards are also promising. In 2004, 86% of the population enjoyed improved sanitation and 93% used an improved water supply.<sup>20</sup> And in 2005, 13% of the population was thought to be malnourished, 7% of the child population five years old and under were underweight, 16% were under height for their age, and 9% of infants had low birth weights.<sup>21</sup>

Although the overall human development indices for people in Colombia are relatively good, the experiences of IDP children and their parents are not the same. The World Bank estimates that 64% of the population live below the national poverty line<sup>22</sup> and rural poverty is especially acute.<sup>23</sup>

In 2005, an assessment by ICRC and the World Food Programme (WFP) found that displaced children and their families, often forced to flee conflict in the rural areas and head to overcrowded city slums, were particularly vulnerable.

*In fleeing from violence, rural households abandon their primary asset: landholdings. Other physical assets such as livestock, equipment and housing are also left behind. Displaced households arrive into urban areas with only cash, valuables that can be easily turned into cash, and their own labour.*

*In relocating, IDP households become economically marginalized as their skills, which are mostly farming-based, are not easily transferred to an urban setting. Given that the urban economy predominantly uses cash as the basis for exchange of goods and services, IDP households are particularly at risk if they do not always have disposable income to hand. This then places constraints on their access to basic necessities such as food, housing, education, and health services.*<sup>24</sup>

In 2006, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its consideration of the rights of children in

Colombia, expressed regret that several of its concerns and recommendations had not been adequately addressed, with particular reference to the rights and protection of children. Several of these issues especially affect children of African descent and indigenous children, as well as children affected by armed conflict and internally displaced children.<sup>25</sup> In short, the rhetoric by those with authority has not been followed with the commensurate action.

## the impact on children

### *fragmented family structure*

Displacement has the effect of eroding family structures in Colombia. The Special Rapporteur on IDPs found that traditional family structures are broken because male members have been killed, have disappeared or are compelled to seek safety or work elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

Women head almost 40% of displaced households.<sup>27</sup> The consequence is that children risk becoming more vulnerable to exploitation and neglect when they have a single parent with limited coping skills and resources. Such conditions do not augur well for children as women are less often the main breadwinners and are in fact more vulnerable to exploitation themselves.

### *education*

Despite the fact that Colombia provides education to the majority of children, those who are displaced have significantly less access. This may be due to poverty, or because IDPs simply fall through the cracks of the social protection systems as they are not counted, are highly mobile, are unaware of the services available to them, or because they endure a combination of these factors. On top of this, not all IDPs want to be recognised as such for fear of being found by those hostile to them.

The 2005 ICRC/WFP assessment bore these findings:

*Of the children surveyed, 66% of those between the ages of six and 14 were, at the time of survey, attending school. Length of displacement greatly affects whether or not children within this age range are sent to school. Over two-thirds of the households that reported that their children were attending school had been displaced for more than three months.*

*Both women and men reported that the costs associated with schooling – uniforms, school fees, learning materials – placed a strain on their households. Young people are an additional source*

*of labour that can be deployed to generate income that goes towards meeting basic needs. This trade-off increasingly influences parents' choice of whether to send their children to school and whether they can keep them there. In trying to meet other basic needs, education is one of the first things to be neglected, with sampled households [allocating] an average of only 3% of their monthly expenditures for education. This means that current needs can threaten the economic mobility of future generations and limit their opportunities to escape poverty and destitution.*<sup>28</sup>

The assessment also found that 58% of the household expenditure was on basic food items (cereals and tubers accounting for, on average, 25% of food costs). The remaining 42% of household expenditure went mainly on housing (12%) and utilities (9%), while health (6%) and education (3%) were less prominent in monthly non-food outlays.<sup>29</sup>

The government issued a decree in November 2001 to guarantee the right to pre-school, basic and middle education for the displaced population. However, NGOs reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child were critical that the implementation of such legal provisions fell woefully short.

*... the decree does not address issues such as continuity of the care, the adoption of measures to promote access, staying in school, and financing for the programs. Thus its action is limited to "the stage of humanitarian aid, as well as that of return or relocation, leaving a gap in care during the transition phase that precedes the processes of return or relocation".*<sup>30</sup>

### *violence*

The impact of the conflict and displacement in terms of violence against young people is particularly disturbing. NGOs reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2005 cited several instances of youngsters being beaten and killed by vigilantes on the claim that they conspire with enemy groups, use drugs, or any other reason invented to target children.

*The attacks are selective against adolescent boys and girls, who combine characteristics of being vulnerable due to conditions such as age, poverty and stigmatization by the armed parties, in particular by paramilitaries, for in many regions of Colombia they consider young people as a "military target".*<sup>31</sup>

In the midst of the internal armed conflict, the civilian population was perceived by the warring parties as “friends or enemies”; children, as well as adults, were perceived as “supporters or subversives”, depending on where they lived.

*Persecution against adolescents was characterized by the control of aspects of their daily lives and open signs of harassment, such as “pintas” or graffiti that stated things like: “Good boys and girls sleep at 7 p.m.; we send to sleep the bad ones at 8. AUC”<sup>32</sup> or “Kill marihuana consumers” or “Kill drug addicts or vicious persons”.*

*The terms “marihuana consumer” or “vicious person” were resumed by paramilitaries as names to call young people who did not attend schools or were jobless ...*

*According to information gathered by several NGOs, between 2001 and 2004, there have been more than 250 killings of young people in Altos de Cazucá; 59 were committed between January 2000 and February 2001. The wave of violence against boys, girls and adolescents who are socially marginalized has worsened since the beginning of 2003.<sup>33</sup>*

### suicide

Another disturbing feature of children caught in the conflict was suicide by young people among certain ethnic groups. The same NGO report to the Committee on the Rights of Child stated:

*Since 2003 the indigenous ethnic group Embera Katío... is being affected by the continued suicide of their girls and boys. The “Jaibanás” or spiritual leaders of these communities blame “a bad spirit” for the suicides of at least 14 children between 2003 and July 2004 ...*

*In 1997 the Colombian army, in the context of the “Genesis Operation” bombarded the sacred territories of this ethnic group, forcing them to displace. By the same time, paramilitary groups made an incursion into their lands, breaking the peaceful relationship they used to have with their territory and nature.<sup>34</sup>*

### child soldiers

Displaced children were most likely to be directly drawn into the conflict. In its 2004 report on Colombia, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers estimated that 14,000 children of both sexes had been recruited to paramilitary and armed groups.<sup>35</sup> The children’s roles in such groups

vary: from being paid informants to acting as combatants or mules. In the case of the armed opposition group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC):

*...the majority were volunteers, some escaping poverty, unemployment or domestic abuse, others seeking to avenge the death of a relative or friend. A primary motive for joining the paramilitaries was the regular pay on offer. Most were denied contact with their families.<sup>36</sup>*

Not surprisingly, many families left their locations to find a safer place for fear their children would be recruited, often under force.

### §

The life of internally displaced children in Colombia is unquestionably very difficult: they endure increased vulnerability in their homes with broken family structures, their education suffers, and they face an increased risk of violence and suicide.

An unfortunate legacy has been passed on to them from the previous generations in a conflict situation that stretches back decades. Strong historical links exist between ethnicity and deprivation in a society that has not sufficiently addressed its own problems of injustice towards minorities. In the absence of any hope of an end to the turmoil, today’s children are likely to pass on the same legacy to future generations.

While there are promising signs of funding for this emergency, solutions to the crisis fall short and the lives of these children remain in peril. There is a lack of political will to comprehensively address the IDP situation, and the government shows ambiguity in its approaches.

All this raises many questions for NGOs like World Vision that work with disenfranchised children, families and communities on how to advocate for systemic and structural changes that enable children to enjoy their rights even in the midst of conflict.

## Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh

### background

The Rohingya people can be traced back as far as the 7th century in Myanmar, yet they are not officially recognised by the government as one of the country's 130 national races. In 1991, as a result of widespread human rights abuses, 258,000 Rohingyas fled their homes in the Akeran State for border countries such as Bangladesh and Thailand. However, an earlier Citizenship Law of 1982 effectively made these people stateless as a result of that exodus.<sup>37</sup>

Most of the refugees returned to Myanmar in 2006. Yet many remained in two camps in Bangladesh, managed by the government with support from organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF).

While there are no difficulties with Bangladesh's legal commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of the refugees, the practice is quite another matter :

*Rohingya refugees are still denied freedom of movement, the right to work and the right to education – and thus are denied the chance of self-reliance and self-determination. Refugees are forced to engage in clandestine activity, working illegally and for low wages. They have been denied the opportunity to develop, to learn and to better themselves, restricted until recently to informal education classes taught by refugee volunteers with limited courses and grades.*<sup>38</sup>

Although the size of the Rohingya population outside the two refugee camps is not fully known, it is estimated that up to 200,000 are living in Bangladesh. They are not recognised as refugees and are often referred to as “economic migrants”. Their condition is also reportedly grim.

*In order to eke out an existence, these unprotected Rohingyas provide cheap labour, working in the local fishing industry, as porters, rickshaw drivers, collecting firewood, etc. Women are seen begging or are employed as domestic servants, often in conditions tantamount to slavery.*

*Public perception of the Rohingya refugees is extremely negative in Bangladesh and local tensions run high. The Bangladeshi media contribute to*

*vilifying them and often portray them as criminals or security threats, accusing them of depleting local resources, degrading the environment and being responsible for socio-economic destabilization in one of the poorest regions of Bangladesh.*<sup>39</sup>

For the international community, however, the Rohingyas are first and foremost refugees. Consequently, the response to their situation has been humanitarian, with organisations such as OCHA and UNHCR playing pivotal roles.

### the Human Development Index

Bangladesh is ranked 147 (out of 179) on the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI).<sup>40</sup> In 2006, life expectancy at birth stood at 63.5 years; 52.5% of the population (15 years and above) were literate; and the combined gross enrolment to educational institutions stood at 52.1%.<sup>41</sup>

In relation to the Millennium Development Goals, Bangladesh has some distance to go to meet these targets with respect to children. Almost half the population of children under five years are underweight.<sup>42</sup> While the net primary school enrolment rate is 94%, only 65% of children complete the fifth grade, and the youth literacy rate is 63%.<sup>43</sup>

### the impact on children

Data on the plight of Rohingya children living outside the camps is not readily available, but there is reliable data on the conditions of children in camps that provides a glimpse of the conditions under which the children of this neglected emergency must suffer.

A 2007 UNHCR report on the protection of Rohingya refugees identified several gaps.<sup>44</sup> Findings from that report serve to illustrate those gaps and their effects on children:

- a) No direct access to essential services, including food supplies, for unregistered children

*Children and adolescents (under the age of 18) comprise 56% of the total refugee population in the camps. A relatively significant number of them (2,461 as of January 2007) are not registered as many were born after the 1992 registration or to unregistered parents living in the camps. Although recently profiled by UNHCR, these children have not yet been formally recognized by the [Government of Bangladesh]. It is a significant hardship because children who are not in the family book are not eligible for food rations, health care or education services. Families therefore have to stretch*



*meager resources further, and insufficient food has resulted in relatively high levels of malnutrition. Moreover, the high cost of medication over and above essential medication provided by UNHCR, further contributes to malnutrition as food is sold to pay for needed medicine.<sup>45</sup>*

b) Lack adequate living space and play areas

*As yet only a limited number of sports and cultural activities for children have been organized and these only from time to time. Playground facilities urgently need repair as the present dilapidated state of current structures pose risks of physical danger.<sup>46</sup>*

c) Inadequate services for disabled children

*At present, there are no specific services available to refugee children with special needs/disabilities. UNHCR is in talks with Handicap International to potentially begin work in the camps, subject to the attainment of relevant funding.<sup>47</sup>*

d) Exploitation

*With regards to cases of sexual exploitation of children, there have been reports and cases deposited of refugee minors (females) being harassed, abused or raped by local villagers. These cases are being taken up and charges pursued by the refugee parents with the help of UNHCR, BLAST [Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust] and the RRRC Office [Office of the Refugee and Repatriation Commissioner]. Unfortunately no training is provided to workers who deal with children in the refugee camps.<sup>48</sup>*

e) Malnutrition

*A survey conducted in 2005 found that out of 508 children under 5 examined, an alarming 65.4% were anaemic and therefore chronically malnourished. The global acute malnutrition rate was determined as being 12.8% for children between 6–59 months. .. While it is believed that the situation has improved in the last two years, current indications are that malnutrition remains relatively high...<sup>49</sup>*

*Another factor contributing to the relatively high incidence of malnutrition is the lack of access to food distribution of some 5,000 persons living in the camps who are not registered, including a*

*large number of children and newborns. Those who are registered share their food rations with those who are not, reducing the calorific intake of the population as a whole below international standards...<sup>50</sup> An outreach programme has been initiated for home visits to identify malnourished children and follow up on cases already served by the Centers. The programme is severely limited by the absence of qualified nutritionists supervising the programme. Nor can the assistance provided remedy the deficiencies in food supply noted above.<sup>51</sup>*

f) Inadequate fuel for each family and inadequate shelters for many

g) Poor health conditions

*Among the most common diseases in the camps are those associated overcrowding, poor sanitation and insufficient personal hygiene. These include respiratory problems, skin infections, diarrhoea, dysentery and malaria. They also reflect a need to focus more health activities on prevention ... Dental care has been absent in the camps altogether causing problems for the vast majority of refugees.<sup>52</sup>*

h) Very limited educational services

*Refugee children are prohibited from accessing formal education within or outside the camps. Education is therefore provided informally for elementary education (kindergarten – grade 6). The teachers are refugee volunteers who have received some basic and ongoing training from TAI [Technical Assistance Incorporated]. Classes run for two hours a day and are based on the Myanmar curriculum focusing on Burmese, English and Mathematics...<sup>53</sup>*

*The fact that many children are not adequately fed has made learning difficult and hindered performance. The absence of lighting is also not conducive to learning for children are unable to study at night...<sup>54</sup> Focus groups discussions with refugees highlighted the concern of many youth (both male and female) about not being provided access to recognized secondary education and the very limited opportunities provided for skills training.<sup>55</sup>*

In short, while Rohingya children in camps live in some security the extremely under-resourced conditions subject



them to serious deprivations in all areas of their lives. We can only imagine how much worse these conditions are for Rohingya children living outside the camps, where many do not have refugee status and are often regarded as “economic migrants”. As mentioned earlier, data on children in these circumstances is not available.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child recognised the plight of Rohingya children in its concluding observations, recommending that the Government of Bangladesh improve the State’s legal obligations and provide essential services in keeping with these children’s rights.<sup>56</sup>

In May 2008, UNHCR announced that the Bangladeshi government would co-operate with its proposal to repatriate thousands of refugees from Myanmar.<sup>57</sup> UNHCR proposed to go for a tripartite agreement with the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to resolve the Rohingya refugee issue. However, the proposal was condemned by Rohingya and Arakan activists who contend that the circumstances in Myanmar have not improved.

Human rights organisations reported almost slave-like conditions for Rohingyas living in Arakan, who are subjected to restrictions on their freedom of movement, have had their land confiscated and endure forced labour and arbitrary taxation.<sup>58</sup>

### §

Clearly Rohingya children live in a difficult environment where there are limited resources for all Bangladeshi children, let alone them.

Rohingya refugee children born in recent years are likely to be the offspring of adults who lived in similar circumstances as children, on one hand demonstrating human resilience and on the other a legacy of deprivation.

Protracted refugee situations that engulf succeeding generations without any durable solutions for resettlement and/or integration clearly signal a neglected emergency.

Bangladesh’s incapacity to successfully host the Rohingya refugees on one hand and the reluctance of Myanmar’s authorities to reintegrate them on the other hand, condemn Rohingya’s children both inside and outside refugee camps to be vulnerable to extreme deprivation and exploitation, and very limited access to basic resources with dire consequences for their survival.

## Chechnya’s internally displaced children

### background

From a disaster management perspective, Chechnya is well into the transition phase from the tragic conflict that erupted in 1994 between Chechen rebels and the Russian army. But the scars of war are still highly visible in that region.

In 2006, it was estimated that 78,000–112,000<sup>59</sup> people were displaced in the Russian Federation and faced an uncertain future; permanent solutions for resettlement remained elusive and the root causes for the conflict were still unresolved.

By 2007, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) appeal for transitional work in the Northern Caucasus resulted in several rehabilitation proposals, such as programmes ensuring safety and security, mine action and education, OCHA co-ordination, poverty reduction and alleviation, food security and agriculture.<sup>60</sup>

### gap between HDI and realities for children in NE

Russia ranks 67th on the Human Development Index: life expectancy at birth is 65 years, the literacy rate for persons 15 years and over is 99.4%, and primary school net enrolment and attendance figures stand at 95%.<sup>61</sup>

Russia appears set to meet its Millennium Development Goals: 87% of the population have improved sanitation and 97% use improved water sources; 3% of the population are under-nourished and 3% of the child population under 5 years are underweight; 14 out of every 1,000 children die at birth, while the under-five mortality rate stands at 18 in every 1,000.<sup>62</sup>

Despite these relatively glowing figures, the UNICEF humanitarian report for 2007 outlined the tragic effect of neglected emergency on Chechen children’s lives: many rely on humanitarian aid, a sizeable share of children do not attend school or their schools are in extremely poor condition, and basic health indicators (infant, child and maternal mortality) are two to four times higher than in the rest of the country.<sup>63</sup>

The scars of war and the ongoing danger are so profound that the need for response is widely recognised.

*The need for psychosocial rehabilitation of an entire generation of children has been recognized by the*

*Chechen government as a key priority for the future. A comprehensive approach to protect children from harm and neglect – as well as to promote the social inclusion of those who are vulnerable – is also a priority. Policy support to the authorities, so as to improve the quality of existing social services, is required.<sup>64</sup>*

### impact of displacement on children

#### heritage

The recent conflict from 1994 to 2006 was the latest in a series of conflicts dating back to the 17th century.

The Noxche (Chechen) people regard themselves as ethnically unique, and while they recognise some relationship to their Ingush neighbours, they have fought to preserve their identity. The history of the Noxche people dates back many centuries, but the term “Chechen” was first coined by Russians in the 17th century after their first encounter with Noxches at a village called Chechen-aul. Many Chechens adopted the Islamic faith in the 18th century, which became a unique mix between the Sunni faith and ancient Noxche religious practices.

A child growing up among the Chechen people learns the Veinakh language (which means “our people”), which is largely oral. He or she would be from one of the 125 clans of Noxche people and live in a village in the mountains, belonging to the nine Tukums, groupings similar to tribes. The clans are not only social institutions, but also have their own elder council of justice and traditional laws.<sup>65</sup>

The conflict – and subsequent neglect of that emergency – resulted in severe disruptions to not only Noxche children’s customs and practices, but also to their fundamental rights. Traditions around housing were violated:

*When opening [Temporary Accommodation Centres] TACs, the authorities did not take into account Chechen cultural practices. For instance, a grown son cannot stay in a cramped room together with his parents and sisters. As a result, young men try to find an alternative place to stay overnight, including outside the TACs, which can in some cases mean risking their lives.<sup>66</sup>*

Many children also lost their place in their clans/communities, and even began living on the streets:

*The Chechen Interior Ministry’s “Operation Homeless Child” has identified 1,000 children*

*who are involved in vagrancy. Even allowing for the fact that the republic has experienced two wars, this figure is a very large one. In the scramble for the political dividends to be obtained from various amnesties, reconstruction projects and other much-bruited activities, street children have escaped the attention of Chechen society and the Chechen leadership.<sup>67</sup>*

#### human rights violations

Reports show that over the seven-year period of recent conflict, the rights of Chechnya’s displaced children were denied or violated by authorities with either punitive intentions or protection purposes that had unfortunate consequences.<sup>68</sup>

In 2000, Human Rights Watch highlighted the Russian order forbidding male Chechen refugees between the ages of ten and sixty from entering or leaving Chechnya.<sup>69</sup> Although the conflict has ended, tensions remain. The security situation has deteriorated in other parts of the North Caucasus and human rights abuses, including abductions and enforced disappearances, persist in the region.<sup>70</sup>

#### child soldiers

In 2004 the Special Rapporteur on Displaced Persons expressed concern about reports on the enlistment of children by the insurgents, and about abuses reportedly committed by security agencies against young persons suspected of being associated with insurgency groups.<sup>71</sup>

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child also expressed concern that children living in Chechnya were deeply affected by the consequences of the conflict, calling on the State party to “strengthen measures taken to protect children from the consequences of the conflict”.<sup>72</sup>

#### education

In 2006, a group of NGOs involved with Chechen refugees reported that IDP children often do not attend school.

*There are various reasons: some parents have insufficient funds for school supplies; other children have left school because of gaps in their education; some parents do not let their children attend remote schools due to concern for their security. There have been cases in which children have found themselves in minefields or combat zones; some children have been run over by military traffic. Schools are overcrowded; hence teachers are not able to provide*

*high-quality education. Many schools suffer from shortages of textbooks. Official promises to build schools at [Temporary Accommodation Centres] TACs were not implemented.<sup>73</sup>*

### §

Childhood is a brief period in the average person's life, but it is also that period when the die is cast. Faced with the loss of traditions, identity, education, freedom, security and even family, the prospects are grim for IDP children in the Chechen region.

Although Russia appears to be on track to achieve the MDGs, there is a widely recognized need for particular attention to the NE situation in Chechnya.

## Lesotho's shepherd boys

*Herd boys epitomise the poverty situation in Lesotho in terms of human deprivation and environmental resources degradation; the continual use of herd boys is an indictment on our society and a mark of national irresponsibility.<sup>74</sup>*

### background

Lesotho has been experiencing a severe drought since 2006 causing what is commonly called a slow onset natural hazard. Extreme weather conditions are not new to Lesotho, but high levels of poverty make it difficult for the country's population to withstand the shock of natural disasters. The rural poor suffer most, particularly those who depend on the land for a living.

Agriculture forms a major part of the country's gross national product. Given Lesotho's high degree of poverty, traditional agricultural methods are widely practiced and children form a significant part of the labour force.

In 2000, 33% of boys aged 5–17 years were found to be working; 23.5% of boys were working for their family's farm or business.<sup>75</sup>

Child labour is particularly prominent when it comes to animal husbandry, where boys from very poor households must herd animals, often at the risk of not having the care and protection that children ought to have.

The situation of these boys in Lesotho is really another example of how a group within a community can be neglected in an emergency. In a country experiencing natural disaster, not everyone is neglected. In this instance shepherd boys have traditionally lived on the edge of society, living in high-risk circumstances. The onset of a natural disaster only deepens the risks and the chances of them being overlooked when compared to their peers who are at home and in schools.

In 2007, Lesotho's drought came on the radar of the humanitarian donor community. The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP),<sup>76</sup> managed by the United Nations, identified priority needs that needed to be covered in seven sectors: agriculture, early recovery, food, health, nutrition, protection, and water and sanitation.<sup>77</sup> But of the US\$22.7 million of funding required, only \$3.8 million was approved through the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), leaving a funding gap of almost \$19 million.

CLUSTERS	FULL REQUIREMENTS (\$)	APPROVED CERF FUNDING (\$)	UNMET REQUIREMENTS (\$)
<b>Agriculture</b>	4,450,206	1,668,067	2,782,139
<b>Early recovery</b>	1,100,000	0	1,100,000
<b>Food</b>	11,100,000	1,455,200	9,644,800
<b>Health</b>	3,339,900	480,698	2,859,202
<b>Nutrition</b>	300,000	0	300,000
<b>Protection</b>	1,275,000	0	1,275,000
<b>Water and sanitation</b>	1,200,000	230,050	969,950
	<b>22,765,106</b>	<b>3,834,015</b>	<b>18,931,091</b>

Lesotho flash appeal: Summary of requirements, by sector, as of 28 July 2007

Source: United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP)<sup>78</sup>

The figures for that time showed an unenthusiastic response from the donor community to Lesotho’s crisis. How have shepherd boys fared in the crisis? Little information is readily available since they are for the most part unseen. What is certain is that their lives are made harder by the crisis.

### children and the Human Development Index

Lesotho is ranked 155 (out of 179) on the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI),<sup>79</sup> with life expectancy at 42.6 years and falling with the growing impact of HIV and AIDS which affects approximately one-quarter of the population.<sup>80</sup> Of its 1.8 million people, 56% live on less than \$2 per day and 82% live in rural areas. Nearly 70% of infants are fully immunised.<sup>81</sup>

In 2004, 37% of the population had adequate sanitary facilities and 79% used improved water sources. The net primary school enrolment rate is 87%, with approximately 73% reaching grade 5, and the secondary enrolment rate is 25%; the adult literacy rate (for persons 15 years and over) is 82%.<sup>82</sup> These low indicators suggest that many children are missing out on schools, adequate health care and nutrition.

Children living in poverty live with greater deprivation, aggravated by natural disaster. No doubt the circumstances of shepherd boys are even more stark as they live with little family support and protection.

### the impact on children

#### *child labour*

The life of a very young shepherd in Lesotho is very hard:

*Kelebone (6) is one of the unfortunate shepherds in Lesotho, who may not have a bright future if he stays an illiterate shepherd up to his adulthood. He is employed to look after three cattle by the neighbor...*

*His mother, who is unemployed, pays the rent and buys food with the money [that Kelebone earns].*

*This money is used to pay his elder sister’s school fees. She is in class five. His father is unemployed too.<sup>83</sup>*

In ratifying the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 138 on the minimum age of employment and the ILO Convention 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, the government of Lesotho made a political commitment to eradicating the exploitative lifestyle that many Lesotho boys endure while herding animals.

Regrettably, there is an evident gap between political intention and the implementation of these conventions, due partly to strong traditional practices and insufficient economic resources to implement programmes that will effectively move these boys into schools and wider social services.

### education

A 2001 joint study by the World Bank and the African Development Bank revealed that:

*Boys receive less education than girls...The bias against boys and men may stem from the fact that parents still view working in South African mines [having spent their youth herding livestock] as the most promising job prospect for males, an occupation believed to require physical strength and endurance more than skills in literacy and numeracy.<sup>84</sup>*

Perhaps in any child's life the most important social institution, second to the family, is school. The benefits of being part of a school are many:

- Literacy and numeracy skills
- Educational materials
- A range of knowledge necessary for employment in adulthood
- Cognitive development
- The discipline needed for intellectual pursuits
- Activities for daily living skills
- If available, a free meal
- Drinking water and sanitation
- Access to basic health care, such as school immunisation programmes
- A record of existence in the an important national institution
- Structured learning environment
- Rhythm of life conducive to operating in a regular work environment
- Learning and/or reinforcing socially desirable behaviours, values and skills
- Entertainment that is age appropriate
- A generally safe environment

By contrast, a childhood spent herding cattle has none of these benefits. A scoping study on child labour in Lesotho describes the lonely and dangerous life of shepherd boys:

*Herding is a highly risky activity for children. It often involves spending weeks in the mountains away from the village and family. The child is responsible for either their own family's flocks and herds or is being paid to look after someone else's and will be held to account if anything goes wrong. Stock theft in Lesotho is relatively common as is competition over grazing land, and so herd boys are often involved in violent altercations or in fighting off thieves and loss of life is not uncommon.*

*Lesotho's weather is also one of extremes and it has the highest diurnal temperature range in the world. This means that winter temperatures can be as low as -20 degrees [Celsius] and summer temperatures as high as +40 degrees C.*

*Herd boys are expected to be looking after the stock in all weather and in remote mountain areas which often become snowbound. They will build small basic huts at the cattle posts and sleep among their animals. Many of them are given just one bag of mealie meal a month and vegetables and meat have to come from whatever they can gather or catch in the mountains. Standards of nutrition, hygiene and medical care are therefore often poor and, despite various attempts to provide schooling to herd boys they are often deprived of the chance to be educated.*

*In discussions with herd boys held in 2002 most indicated that they particularly felt they were missing out on being educated and not being able to go to school. Those employed by non-relatives also said that sometimes they were not paid or perhaps only given a couple of sheep per year in payment for their services.<sup>85</sup>*

The Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2001 concluding observations observed the poor state of the education system at that time but nonetheless made strong recommendations for shepherd boys to be educated.<sup>86</sup>

### §

The ILO Convention on the worst forms of child labour recognises that poverty is a leading contributing factor to child labour, and that solutions lie in long-term economic growth leading to social progress.

It falls on the tripartite membership (government, labour union and employers) to initiate comprehensive action, taking into account the importance of free basic education, the removal of children from places of work and the rehabilitation and social integration of former child labourers while addressing the needs of their families.

The responsibility lies not only with the government of Lesotho but also with the adult community to adopt practices that protect children, especially herd boys.



## “hidden” Iraqi refugee children in Jordan

### background

The war in Iraq has received a great deal of coverage in the Western media. The general focus has been on the cost to lives and the uncertain future. Less highlighted are the numbers of Iraqis who fled to neighbouring countries and the toll that has taken on their lives.

Unlike refugee situations in other parts of the world, Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are not visible, for they are not in refugee camps or specially demarcated areas where they can be easily recognised. A March 2008 report by the International Rescue Committee estimates that there are more than two million Iraqi refugees, making it one of the largest humanitarian crisis in our time.<sup>87</sup>

Humanitarian organisations involved in addressing the needs of Iraqi refugees observed:

- The generosity of host governments to provide refuge for Iraqis, at times at high economic and social costs for their own citizens.
- The inadequacy of provisions made for Iraqis in these countries, especially those who are not able to afford vital services such as health, education and proper housing.
- An absence of clarity over the longer-term solutions to the problems of displacement
- Mixed reactions from the donor community for a country and population that is oil rich.

In the midst of all these uncertainties displaced Iraqi children, such as those in Jordan, live in desperate conditions. The World Vision Regional Vice President described the situation thus:

*Iraqi children are among the most distressed refugee populations worldwide. Years of daily violence continues to wreak untold damage to their physical and mental health, shattering young lives.*

*Without legal status, psychological rehabilitation, proper education and medical assistance, this devastated and scattered generation is trapped with little hope for the future unless meaningful assistance is provided by the international community.<sup>88</sup>*

One year later the message still has relevance. World Vision’s report of Iraqi children in Jordan outlined significant areas of deprivation, including:

- **Education.** School-aged children suffer major gaps

in their education or are not being educated at all; this is in part due to the ambiguity in the legal status of Iraqi children. Little or no income and dwindling financial reserves for the majority of Iraqi families has also made it impossible for children to enter the formal education system.

- **Child labour.** There are growing incidents of child labour as children are under increasing pressure to find jobs in order to supplement their families’ income and are at the risk of exploitation.
- **Psycho-social well-being.** Ever increasing exposure to violence, either as witnesses or victims, that bear a particularly heavy psychological burden. On top of this, children and families live in a climate of fear – from the past, present and future – and children consequently experience bed-wetting, sleeplessness, regular nightmares and panic attacks, among other symptoms. In the absence of a free, safe environment, many Iraqi children pass their days within the confines of their homes, feeling frustrated and bored, with minimal opportunities for social interaction. There are also increasing incidents of domestic violence.
- **Health.** Poor diets due to cost of food beyond the cost that many can afford resulting in childhood malnutrition. For those needing long-term medical attention the prospects are bleak, especially for those whose parents do not have the financial resources.<sup>89</sup>

In response to these problems, UNICEF launched a fundraising campaign in May 2007 aimed at addressing the need for education, health and psychological support among Iraqi families.<sup>90</sup>

In relation to Jordan, the campaign sought to ensure that an additional 20,000 Iraqi school-aged children would have the benefit of formal and non-formal education; an additional 15,000 children under five years would have the benefit of an improved immunisation system; and unaccompanied and separated children would be identified and supported to find and re-unite with their immediate and extended families.<sup>91</sup> For all this, UNICEF sought US\$4,950,000 for Jordan, a very small sum compared to what is spent on a daily basis for the war in Iraq.

### the Human Development Index

Ranking 86 on the Human Development Index, Jordanians have a life expectancy of 72 years at birth.<sup>92</sup> Jordan is well on its way in meeting the Millennium Development Goal



targets with less than 7% of the population living on less than \$2 per day, 93% using improved sanitation and 97% using improved water supplies. Only 4% of the child population under five years have low birth weight. With respect to education, the adult literacy rate (of those fifteen years and over) is 91%, the youth literacy rate is 99%, primary school enrolment is 89% and 96% of children reach grade 5.<sup>93</sup> However, because many Iraqi children remain hidden for all the reasons mentioned above, their life chances continue to diminish compared to an average child in Jordan.

### the impact on children

While it is not clear today how these HDI figures for children in Jordan have been affected by the large influx of Iraqi refugees, it is not likely to improve given reports of a poor conditions of both Iraqi and Jordan's poorest.

#### education

*...Jordan's already overcrowded classrooms cannot accommodate a new influx of students. In response, UNICEF is providing the Ministry of Education with technical support in order to help implement double-shift schools and rent additional buildings to accommodate the students.<sup>94</sup>*

*Access to education has improved in both Syria and Jordan. But many Iraqi families still keep their children away from schools, fearing that sending them to school will require them to "register", which might lead to their discovery and subsequent return to Iraq. Some refugees told us that they had no transportation to get their children to school. We also heard stories of Iraqi children being harassed and made to feel unwelcome. Government officials in Jordan and Syria stressed to us that the schools were open to Iraqi children, but there may be a need to send the refugees clearer signals that their children are welcome in classrooms.<sup>95</sup>*

#### health

*The high cost of drugs and medical care in Jordan is a major problem for impoverished Iraqi asylum-seekers, according to a survey by the International Medical Corps (IMC) and the US Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH) released on 26 March.*

*...Nearly 50 percent of respondents said they spent at least one quarter of their income on health bills,*

*while 14 percent said over half their income went on medical care, particularly for specialised services. Free medical centres often provide basic tests, but in many cases patients need specialist treatment or care not available at these centres.*

*...The survey also revealed that half of the respondents said they needed mental health and psychosocial services but only 5 percent had access to help in this field.*

*At least 64 percent of interviewed patients said they felt stressed, and 22 percent had witnessed violence or were generally affected by displacement.*

*...During a recent meeting of countries hosting Iraqi asylum-seekers, Jordan said it needed JD 176 million (\$248 million) to build clinics and renovate hospitals in Amman, Irbid and Zarqa to be better able to provide medical help to the Iraqis.<sup>96</sup>*

Despite the positive reports from some quarters, the March 2008 report from International Rescue Committee reveals quite another situation.

*There is little factual base for the widely held notion that the refugees are returning home. We found no evidence of large-scale return; in fact, most refugees find the idea inconceivable. UNHCR says only two families have returned from Jordan and very few have ventured home from Syria and stayed ... we spoke to refugees in Syria who had tried to go back to Iraq but found their old homes occupied and their neighborhoods too dangerous. One woman said her husband had gone back and has not been heard from since.<sup>97</sup>*

#### §

The solutions are not yet in sight and until then Iraqi children must bear the consequences of a war. Experience to date suggests that children caught in a neglected emergency are often tomorrow's adults who have not overcome the scars of deprivation and exploitation. Displaced Iraqi children need every chance for protection today in order to reverse a likely cycle of deprivation and exploitation.

## part three

# summary and recommendations

The hypothesis that child survival is worst in neglected emergency (NE) situations is confirmed by the findings presented in section two. Children in these situations suffer most as their well-being is compromised by the unavailability of essential services in education, health and protection from exploitation and deprivations.

Although international humanitarian actors recognise the dire situation of children in NE, resources needed for proper rehabilitation and transition are often not forthcoming to the degree required. The inevitable results are partial at best. Consequently, children's survival is worse in an NE when compared to other disadvantaged groups of children in those countries.

Ratification of international instruments, such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, are good but do not assure compliance – at least, not to the degree that the rights of children in an NE are protected. The data shows that international human rights monitoring mechanisms, such as the UN Special Procedures mandate and treaty bodies, thoroughly examine the issues affecting children in NE situations.

In keeping with these examinations, far-reaching recommendations are made to State's parties and the wider humanitarian community, which – if implemented – would break the cycle of deprivation and exploitation for NE children in Bangladesh, Colombia, Lesotho and Russia. But the association between human rights promotion and emergency /development programming is not sufficiently close to guarantee the requisite response.

Sadly, the Committee on the Rights of the Child appears helpless in the face of State parties' failure to carry out their recommendations. But failure is not always due to obstruction or neglect. For some States (such as Lesotho)

political will to implement international human rights standards remains in the realm of wishful thinking when there are insufficient financial resources to convert that will into practical solutions.

Possibly the most troubling aspect of these findings is that the child in an NE situation often inherits a life of deprivation and exploitation. Such is the case when an NE remains protracted over several years affecting one generation after another, as we have found in Russia, Bangladesh, Lesotho and Colombia.

Clearly, adequate funding would go a far way in addressing the plight of children in NE, but lasting solutions seem to rest only in engaging in processes that deal with the root causes. There was insufficient evidence that the root causes for the emergencies were addressed when seeking lasting solutions in the interest of children in NE.

A humanitarian response must make children a priority group in any NE situation if lasting change is to be realised. It is evident from the research that a humanitarian response is only as good as its ability to effectively address the plight of children.

Mechanisms such as the UNHCR Protection Cluster Working Group are critical in ensuring that child protection is a significant part of protection. UNICEF's current policy on child protection should be strongly supported by the donor community as it seeks to ensure that essential services reach children in an NE. Consistently applying the UNHCR standards, such as the Conclusion on Children at Risk<sup>98</sup> and Best Interest Determination,<sup>99</sup> is also essential when seeking solutions that include protection.

Humanitarian donor funding ought to be guided by human rights recommendations, thereby ensuring that children

in NE situations are properly protected in humanitarian response initiatives.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship stipulates respecting and promoting the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.<sup>100</sup> This principle ought to be backed by targeted funding that supports human rights recommendations by the treaty body and special procedures mechanisms. This will strengthen existing channels between human rights mechanisms and humanitarian sectors for the protection of children in NE.

The political will of national and host governments is pivotal to addressing the root causes of NE and in choosing solutions that acknowledge that children's well-being is critical to bringing about lasting change. The IASC should once again turn its attention to strengthening political will to promote the development of lasting solutions in addressing NE. The earlier initiatives in July 2006 are still relevant as was the ambitions expressed then – the development of a coherent IASC strategy for advocacy for neglected crisis at the global level.<sup>101</sup>

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