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The Worst Forms of Child Labour in conflict and post conflict settings: results from a research project

International
Programme on
the Elimination
of Child Labour
(IPEC)

**The Worst Forms of Child Labour in conflict
and post conflict settings:
results from a research project**

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
International Training Centre (ITC)

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First published 2010

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ISBN 978-92-9049-551-2 (Print)

ISBN 978-92-9049-552-9 (Web PDF)

NOTE



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union (project DCI-HUM/2007/142-112). The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the ITC ILO and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

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Designed and printed by the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin, Italy

Acknowledgements

This publication has been produced by the ILO's International Training Centre (ITCILO) and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

The research on which it draws is part of a larger project that has examined the worst forms of child labour in conflict and post-conflict settings and is developing tools for practitioners working in those settings. The research was organized and coordinated by the John and Elnora Ferguson Centre for African Studies, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, United Kingdom. Data were supplied by country teams, which prepared reports and supporting documentation. This brochure was assembled from the country data and written by one of the consultants on the project, Peter Dorman.

Staff at IPEC Geneva, the ILO Jerusalem office, UNICEF Palestine, the International Labour Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Programme at the ITCILO, and participants in the "Technical meeting on the worst forms of child labour in (post) conflict settings A901495" that took place from 31 August to 2 September 2010 in Turin, Italy, contributed comments that helped with the revision of the text.

Sophie De Coninck (an IPEC technical specialist on child labour and armed conflict) and Blerina Vila (a programme officer with the ITC Child Labour, Forced Labour and Trafficking Programme) guided its preparation.

The publication was made possible thanks to a financial contribution by the European Union.

Acronyms

ACRWC:	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EFA:	Education For All
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IPEC:	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
ITCILO:	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
OPT:	Occupied Palestinian Territories
UN:	United Nations
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
WFCL:	Worst forms of child labour

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1. INTRODUCTION

Child labour, especially its worst forms, has received plenty of attention in recent years. It has been the topic of international conventions and the focus of lawmakers and researchers, and in several countries local programmes have been developed to combat the practice. Little is known, however, about child labour in regions affected by armed conflict. In fact, we are just beginning to see how armed conflict fosters child labour and exacerbates its effects.

This report provides an overview of a recent study that sheds new light on these pressing issues. It was undertaken by the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford (United Kingdom), in conjunction with the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and the ILO's International Training Centre (ITC). In the pages that follow we look at the scope and methodology of the study, and its portraits of conflict and child labour in five regions of Africa and the Middle East. We then describe some of the main themes that emerged overall, and make a set of recommendations grounded in research results.



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The motivation behind this research

Our motivation in conducting the research and producing this report is to share the findings and any questions raised in the hope that these can inform the many groups and individuals - national and international, governmental, community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social partners - that are trying to make a better life for children who are being exploited and abused.

Our main question concerns the impact of armed conflict on the incidence of child labour, in terms of the form it takes and the degree of its severity. This can be broken down into a number of other questions: Are there particular risks that are intensified in the wake of international and civil wars? How does child labour in conflict conditions interact with other social conditions? What is the impact of child labour on affected children's education and health? Are the risks associated with child labour in conflict situations different for girls and boys?

Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient time and resources to give confident answers. The study could not formally compare children exposed to conflict and its aftermath to those not exposed to it, controlling for all the other relevant factors. It was also not possible to assemble statistically valid samples within the conflict-affected regions themselves. However, the study does represent a pioneering attempt to address this set of issues systematically, and it identifies possible forces at work while pointing to the most urgent gaps for future research to address.

Five sites were selected for case studies: Angola, the Casamance region of southern Sénégal, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) of Gaza and the West Bank, Sierra Leone, and the semi-autonomous southern region of Sudan. In each of these areas the Bradford researchers appointed local partners, who collected the actual data. For each country or region, the data consisted of the following components:

- a literature review assembling the results of past research into the history, character and impact of the conflict in question, the socioeconomic and cultural context, the general situation of child labour, education and other child-related factors, and the responses of governmental and non-governmental parties;
- in-depth interviews with key informants, such as local and national officials, people in aid organizations, teachers, employers, union officers, religious leaders and law enforcement personnel, in which the questions motivating this study were explored;
- individual and collective (focus group) interviews with parents and other adults with personal experience of child labour matters;
- structured interviews with working and non-working children, offering both statistical data and first-person narratives that can illuminate the circumstances surrounding child labour in the chosen areas.

Given the resource constraints, we decided within the five study areas to select particular locations -specific cities or villages; and to focus on specific types of child labour. While this means the results cannot be used to make broad generalizations, it does add depth to the study.



The study for each of the five areas was documented separately, and a synthesis report compiled summarizing the overall project. This summary draws on all aspects of the work: formal reports as well as background data.

The main output is a set of possible pathways by which conflict can influence either the prevalence of child labour - primarily its worst forms - or its consequences. It is important to stress that the study does not offer a "scientific" account of the conditions under which child labour in various degrees does or does not occur. Rather, it identifies problems which might arise, and which those working in such settings should be attentive to. More research is required to move from the hypothesis-generating stage, which is what this study represents, to the stage of hypothesis-testing and prediction.

Before moving forward, we review the international agreements that provide definitions for the terms used in this document, as well as the broad legal and ethical context. Four agreements in particular are of overarching significance: a United Nations convention, two International Labour Organization conventions, and (given that four of the five case studies are in Africa) a charter promulgated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1990

This landmark United Nations Convention came into force in 1990 and has 140 signatories. Relevant articles include:

Article 7 - this requires that all children be given a legally registered name.

Article 28 - this mandates that primary education and some form of secondary education be made available to all children.

Article 32 - this calls for children "to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." To fulfill this right, governments must set minimum ages for employment, regulate hours and conditions of work, and actually enforce these provisions.

Article 33 - this prohibits children from being used in trafficking illegal drugs.

Article 34 - this prohibits the exploitation of children for purposes of prostitution and pornography.

Article 35 - this prohibits the sale or trafficking of children "for any purpose or in any form".

Article 38 - this prohibits the use of children below the age of 15 in armed conflict.

Article 39 - this requires the rehabilitation of children who have been victimized by exploitation, abuse or conflict.

Two optional protocols to this Convention have been issued; one on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and a second on child trafficking, prostitution and pornography. The first has 125 signatories, the second 117.

Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

This ILO convention requires ratifying states to pursue a comprehensive national policy to eliminate child labour and to set minimum age levels for admission to employment, and for light and hazardous work. The minimum age shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling, and in any case shall not be less than 15 years for employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young people.

While the recognized minimum age is 15, there are exceptions. According to Article 2.4, ratifying states "whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may, after consultation with the relevant worker and employer organizations where such exist, initially specify a minimum age of 14." Special conditions apply in such cases.

No child below the age of 18 shall be engaged in work "which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young persons."

Regarding light work (Article 7), "National laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age on light work" as long as such work does not threaten their health or development, or interrupt or harm their education, vocational orientation, or training programmes.

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

This ILO convention, adopted in 1999 and ratified by 172 countries, calls for governments to take "immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency". Its critical section is Article 3, which specifies the worst forms of child labour as:

- (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- (d) work, which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

These activities are to be prohibited for all those under the age of 18. However, states enjoy full discretion in determining what constitutes a hazardous activity. Article 4.1 states: "The types of work referred to under Article 3(d) shall be determined by national laws or regulations or by the competent authority, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, taking into consideration relevant international standards, in particular Paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999."



African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), 1990

This charter, promulgated by the African Union and effective since 1999, has been ratified by 45 of the 53 countries in Africa. It covers much of the same ground as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but with a number of region-specific differences.

Article 6 confers the right to be registered, separate from, and in addition to, the right to have a name.

Article 11 guarantees a right to education, but governments have some discretion over whether this right applies to secondary as well as primary school.

Article 15 addresses child labour and is almost identical to Article 32 of the CRC, except that the African version embodies a slight shift from adversarial enforcement to the use of publicity as a means for achieving its goals. In addition to the stipulations that governments will issue regulations and provide appropriate penalties, elements in both documents, the ACRWC adds an extra obligation to "promote the dissemination of information on the hazards of child labour to all sectors of the community."

Article 22 on armed conflict parallels Article 38 of the CRC.

Articles 27 and 28, on sexual exploitation and drug abuse, are essentially the same as the CRC's Articles 34 and 33.

Finally, Article 29 on the sale and trafficking of children mirrors Article 35 of the CRC, except that the African version also adds a prohibition on the use of children for begging.

Even though these international instruments are not perfectly congruent, together they provide an overlapping consensus on what activities are inappropriate for children; what social rights children should have, particularly in relation to employment; and what measures governments should take to assure that the interests of children are upheld. We use them here as a composite guide to the proper goals of legislation, implementation and intervention programmes developed by international agencies and civil society institutions.



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2. COUNTRY PROFILES

These profiles were compiled using research undertaken specifically for the study as well as other reports and surveys.

Angola

Portugal fought to retain its African colonies until 1974, when officers in its overseas wars became disaffected and ousted the dictatorship in Lisbon. In the chaos of revolution, insufficient attention was given to the need for an orderly transition to independence. The guerilla movements that had fought the Portuguese, particularly in Angola, turned to fighting one another. After Angolan independence was declared in 1975 a protracted and brutal conflict ensued. The governing party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), was supported by the Soviet Union, while the rebel forces – in particular the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) – were backed by the United States and South Africa. War raged back and forth across a large swath of Angola, until a peace agreement between the MPLA and UNITA was finally signed in 2002. Since then, sporadic, localized conflict has continued between the government and separatist elements in the oil-producing north.

The Angolan civil war was marked by a high level of violence. As it gradually petered out, it left an estimated death toll of one-and-a-half million out of a total population of perhaps 15 million, and nearly four-and-a-half million people displaced or exiled. The country lay in ruins, with profound impacts on the economy, infrastructure and government capacity.

A snapshot of the country on the eve of peace is provided by the United Nations Children's Fund Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) for 2001 (UNICEF 2010). Due to poor security conditions in much of the country, the survey oversampled residents of government-held cities and provided no coverage of the mostly-rural war zones. Bearing this in mind, we can still see that children were unmistakable victims of this conflict. Nearly a third of children surveyed showed signs of malnourishment, and almost half had stunted growth. The births of fewer than 30 per cent of the children had been registered, and this figure was less than 20 per cent for children in rural areas. Child labour in the 5-14 age bracket was widespread. About 9 per cent of children reported working outside their household, with approximately the same ratios for boys and girls. However there is reason to suspect under-reporting (for instance, the number does not change whether the reference period is a week or a year, contrary to logic and international experience.) A further 6 per cent (7.4 per cent of girls) were engaged in household chores for more than four hours per day.

Above all, work on family farms or other businesses was extensive. While overall 21 per cent of the children said they did this kind of work, the proportion jumped to 33.6 per cent for the under-represented rural sample. Of these rural children, 14.3 per cent said they worked between 20 and 39 hours per week, and a further 4.1 per cent said they worked 40 or more hours per week. Meanwhile, only just over a half of primary-school age children were actually enrolled in school, and attrition was likely to cause a further quarter of this subgroup to fail to complete the fifth grade.



By the conclusion of the war, 100,000 children had been separated from their families and 750,000 had lost at least one parent. Many of the separated children are still seeking to be reunited with their families; a task complicated by the low rate of registration. As the years pass, children forget their parents and siblings, if indeed they ever had a chance to know them (Department of Peace Studies, Bradford University, 2010a).

Because of the enormous shadow of the war, Angola remains one of the world's poorest countries. Overall, Angola ranks 143rd among the 182 nations and territories measured by the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2009). But its economy has begun to grow again. As an oil exporter, it benefits from the high petroleum prices of the past decade. This has opened a gap between urban and rural Angolans: productivity in agriculture is a fraction of the national average, and nearly all rural households live in poverty. A particular problem in rural areas is landmines. As of 2007, investigators had found unexploded mines in almost 2,000 communities, and suspected mines in more than 3,000 others. Hundreds have been killed or wounded by setting off these hidden devices (Electronic Mine Information Network, 2009).

Child labour remains ubiquitous in Angola today, although we do not possess any hard numbers. The pervasiveness of poverty, the lack of educational facilities and the absence of social support systems - all legacies of the decades of conflict - mean child labour will continue to be a significant challenge.

As is generally the case, the worst forms of child labour are difficult to quantify in Angola, but their major characteristics are fairly well-known and received further documentation in this study. They include the following:

- **Trafficked children:** Boys are at risk of being sold into servitude through networks that extend into neighbouring countries. The practice of parents sending their (boy) children to Koranic schools in other West African countries, where they will beg under the tutelage of marabouts, can also result in abuse. While the inculcation of religious humility through seeking alms is widely supported, our respondents noted that parental trust can be exploited by those who personally profit from the use of the children's earnings, or who are unduly harsh in enforcing discipline. Another concern with this practice is that it appears to contravene the prohibition on begging enunciated in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990).
- **Child prostitution:** in Angola this exploits mainly girls. Quantitative measurements are lacking, but cases are not difficult to come by. To some extent, the current situation perpetuates a practice that became established during the civil war, when armed groups on all sides would seek out and often coerce children into prostitution.
- **Drug trafficking:** Primarily street children are engaged in this work. Adults in the drug trade use children as go-betweens to make direct contact with retail users.
- **Street children:** An earlier study had put the number of homeless street children in Angola in 2000 at 24,000 (US Department of Labor, 2004); more recent estimates are not available. While all street children do not work, most presumably do. Their activities range from relatively benign to hazardous, and as we shall see, street life in Angola has added dangers stemming from post-conflict conditions.
- **Domestic labour:** Most domestic workers are girls, and they are employed primarily by relatives. This may explain why this type of work is viewed favorably in Angolan culture, yet it is well known that any domestic worker may be subjected to very long

hours or abusive treatment. More research is needed to ascertain the balance between desirable and undesirable outcomes of domestic work including for relatives.

The government of Angola has ratified all the instruments described above, including the two optional protocols to the CRC. In conjunction with its neighbours, Angola has entered into a Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons (ECOWAS and ECCAS 2006), and it has begun to take legal measures to close down channels through which children are transported out of the country and into servitude. No public initiatives have yet been undertaken to combat child prostitution, however. The minimum age for employment has been set at 14, consistent with Convention 138. Working in partnership with the United States government and several international NGOs, the Angolan government has implemented a project to promote education and remove thousands of children from exploitative work in Luanda and Benguela. The government's National Institute for the Child has worked with UNICEF to create Child Protection Networks throughout the country; these coordinate public and private efforts to combat trafficking and related forms of child labour (US Department of Labor, 2009).

The Angolan research team affiliated with this study confined its data collection to Luanda and the fishing-dependent towns of Lobito and Benguela in the southwest of the country. The goal was to sample street children in Luanda, and children working in fishing and related trades in Lobito and Benguela. In all, 98 children were interviewed, along with 17 parents, and 30 other informants representing a cross section of international agencies and civil society.



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Much of the research enriched our understanding of the circumstances Angolan children find themselves in and the choices they make to cope with them. The street children gave honest accounts of their lives, and several who were prostitutes narrated the process that led them to their present work. Parents described their attitudes towards their children and were forthcoming about their concerns in the face of their children's activities. There were 16 different occupations represented among the working children, the most common of which is cleaning cars. All the working children provided information on their earnings.

Several insights deserving of particular notice were provided by respondents:

1. Educational institutions are under great stress because a generation of people missed out on formal education due to the war. Schools must therefore simultaneously serve adults whose previous education was cut short by conflict, along with the current generation of students. Thus it was found that adolescents of 15 or 16 years of age were being asked to share classrooms with 7 or 8-year-olds; many refuse to do so. This bottleneck reduces access to quality education for today's children and may lead them to leave school early and take up work.
2. Despite efforts by the government to disarm the population, high-powered weapons like AK-47s have found their way into the hands of children. Street gangs possess these guns, and terrorize adults and children alike. Several adults described being robbed in their homes by armed children, and there is agreement that street-oriented work performed by children has been made increasingly hazardous. These gangs have become powerful recruiters of children who need protection from them. Some parents appear to collude with their children's participation in these gangs in the hope of sharing the spoils; others permit it due to intimidation. Child gang activity is sometimes complicated by its connections to conflict between adult groups. The informants believed the government is not committed to disarming children; the government points out that it lacks the staff and resources to accomplish this.
3. Family separation is intricately linked to child labour, particularly its worst forms, yet families have proven difficult to reunite in many cases. This may be due to an inability to recognize and remember long-lost family members, but it may also stem from the refusal of parents to accept the return of children who have been living on the street and are seen as "contaminated" by harsh or illegal activities. The children too may refuse to return to their parents, especially after they have experienced the sort of independence that goes with earning their own income, however meagre. Even when a family is reunited, this may not be permanent. Adults are sometimes forced to travel long distances from home seeking economic opportunities, leaving children to fend for themselves; and extreme poverty means some parents are simply unable to provide for children in the household. Finally, conflict-related factors can lead to dysfunctional cycles of distrust and hostility between child and parent, such as when children are accused of causing family misfortune by sorcery—a relatively common phenomenon, according to our informants.



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4. The cultural legacy of the war, while difficult to pin down, is significant. Social attitudes became "harder", particularly towards girls, who under conflict conditions were seen as fodder for sex work. Some schools, intending to combat overcrowding by running night classes, were unable to do so because the security of female students was too much at risk. A sexual assault can set off a downward spiral that leads to prostitution; even the victim's parents will sometimes send her out into the streets.
5. The precariousness of life during the conflict gave rise to a more short-term orientation: why plan for a distant future that may never come? This tends to devalue education in favour of a child's immediate entry into the labour force. Informants said some parents were of the attitude that children need to be able to earn an income as rapidly as possible, since at any moment they could be left with no family to take care of them.

The research conducted in Angola suggests that the cultural after-effects of violence play a major role in the prevalence of child labour for both boys and girls. There is also a direct "material" aspect, as represented by the destruction of schools and proliferation of guns. An effective strategy to address the worst forms of child labour would need to operate on both the cultural and material fronts.



The Casamance region of Sénégal

Most of Sénégal lies to the north and east of Gambia, but a strip little more than 100 km wide extends south of Gambia and north of Guinea-Bissau. This segment, whose culture and ethnicity differ from the rest of the country, consists of the two regions of Kolda and Ziguinchor, collectively referred to as Casamance. Beginning in the early 1980s, the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) began to wage a political campaign for independence. Repression by the central government initiated a cycle of escalating hostilities, which culminated in widespread armed conflict during the 1990s. Although the conflict became less intense during the early years of the 2000's decade, and despite a peace agreements signed in 2004, peace and security have not fully returned. Armed groups continue to operate across the border between Sénégal and Guinea-Bissau, and there is also internecine warfare within the Casamance independence movement itself.

Overall, Sénégal is one of the poorer countries in Africa; it ranks 166th on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2009). Detailed information about the economic status of Casamance is not available, but it is probable that the ongoing conflict has had a negative impact. It is estimated that 64,000 people have been displaced, and between 100 and 250 villages harbour landmines, many in the prime cultivation areas for commercial crops such as cashews (Handicap International, 2006). Indeed, commercially significant crops have been drawn into the conflict, with rebel soldiers sometimes trying to prevent the return of displaced farmers.

The general child labour situation can be sketched with some confidence, thanks to a survey by the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) conducted in 2005. Although this survey covered the entirety of Sénégal, for our purposes it was possible to extract data on those children living in the two Casamance regions of Kolda and Ziguinchor.

About 80 per cent of children (both boys and girls) between the ages of seven and 12 are in school, but the data do not indicate whether their grade levels are advancing on schedule. When asked whether they had worked during the previous week, 40 per cent of boys and 36 per cent of girls said they had. Most children said they worked at least four hours per day, while more than 44 per cent of boys and 42 per cent of girls said that they worked more than 40 hours per week. When asked if they had worked in the past year, 67 per cent of boys and 68 per cent of girls answered yes. Thus, it is clear that child labour is widespread, with an almost equal incidence among boys than girls.

The picture changes when we include household chores (unpaid household services). Approximately four-fifths of all girls report doing these chores, whereas only a fifth of the boys do. If one uses a cutoff of at least 20 hours per week, then only 4 per cent of boys engage in this form of child labour, while slightly more than 40 per cent of girls do. Putting this imbalance together with the nearly equal balance in work outside the domestic realm, we see that girls bear a larger burden of work than boys in Casamance.

SIMPOC does not tell us about the worst forms of child labour, except insofar as they can be inferred from the distribution of activities that children report. However the current study documents many of the worst forms of labour directly. Researcher observation, respondent interviews, and scrutiny of previous reports indicate that problems in Casamance include:



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- **Street children:** No count exists of these children in Ziguinchor or elsewhere in Casamance, but both children living on the street and those working on the street during the day are visible and were accessible for interviews. They support themselves with a variety of activities, such as vending, washing cars, and performing chores. While the activities themselves are not hazardous, the street environment frequently is. Begging, both unorganized and the religiously motivated begging of talibé, is common.
- **Domestic work:** Typically performed by girls, domestic work is regarded as problematic, but it is also deeply ingrained in local customs. In particular, children who have been separated from their families may be sheltered in return for service. Parents who can no longer afford to support their children send them to relatives, who also expect work in return. As in other parts of Africa, the balance between exploitation and support for children in need is not well understood.
- **Trafficking:** Primarily boys are abducted and trafficked to neighboring countries for enforced servitude. The available evidence indicates, however, that this occurs less in Casamance than in other regions of Sénégal.
- **Drugs and prostitution:** Informants viewed involvement in drug trading and prostitution as interrelated. The incidence of both these activities appeared to be to be higher among displaced children in Guinea-Bissau than in Casamance itself. However drug production has been reported in Casamance, which means children there may be at risk of getting involved in distribution.
- **Other hazardous work:** In urban areas children are often subject to exploitative apprenticeships, where the hours are long and the tasks are dangerous and tasks inappropriate to their age and experience. In the countryside, a particular risk is land mines. Cashew nuts, as a major export crop, have been contested between government and rebel troops, so the areas where cashews grow and where child labour is exploited may be mined.



The government of Sénégal has ratified all relevant international instruments: the CRC and its two optional protocols, ILO Conventions 138 and 182, and the ACRWC. It has set the minimum age for employment at 15, although education is compulsory until age 16. It collaborated with the IPEC on a Time Bound Programme (TBP) from 2003 to 2007, which targeted begging, domestic labour and hazardous work in agriculture, fishing and herding. Sénégal also joined the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons and in 2008 launched a National Plan of Action against trafficking, particularly in women and children. Sénégal is also the only country studied in this research, which has prepared a National Action Plan against the worst forms of child labour (WFCL). In addition, a large number of NGOs operate local and nationwide programs to reunite families, promote education, combat trafficking, shelter independent children and raise community awareness regarding children's rights.

After conducting its review of the available literature, the current study selected two representative locations for additional data collection, Ziguinchor in the west and Goudomp further to the east. A total of 109 working and 71 non-working children were interviewed, along with 80 parents, 47 employers or apprenticeship tutors, and 11 public or civic key informants. The data from these interviews were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The Sénégal study provides considerable qualitative depth on the worst forms of child labour listed above. The hazards that street children face are described in detail, as well as the family and other circumstances that placed children in this position. For instance, it was found that the majority of children interviewed who were engaged in the worst forms of child labour had been forced into this work by their parents. This research corroborates the earlier finding that two-thirds of all Sénégalaise families are too poor to properly feed their families (Understanding Children's Work, 2007). Respondents

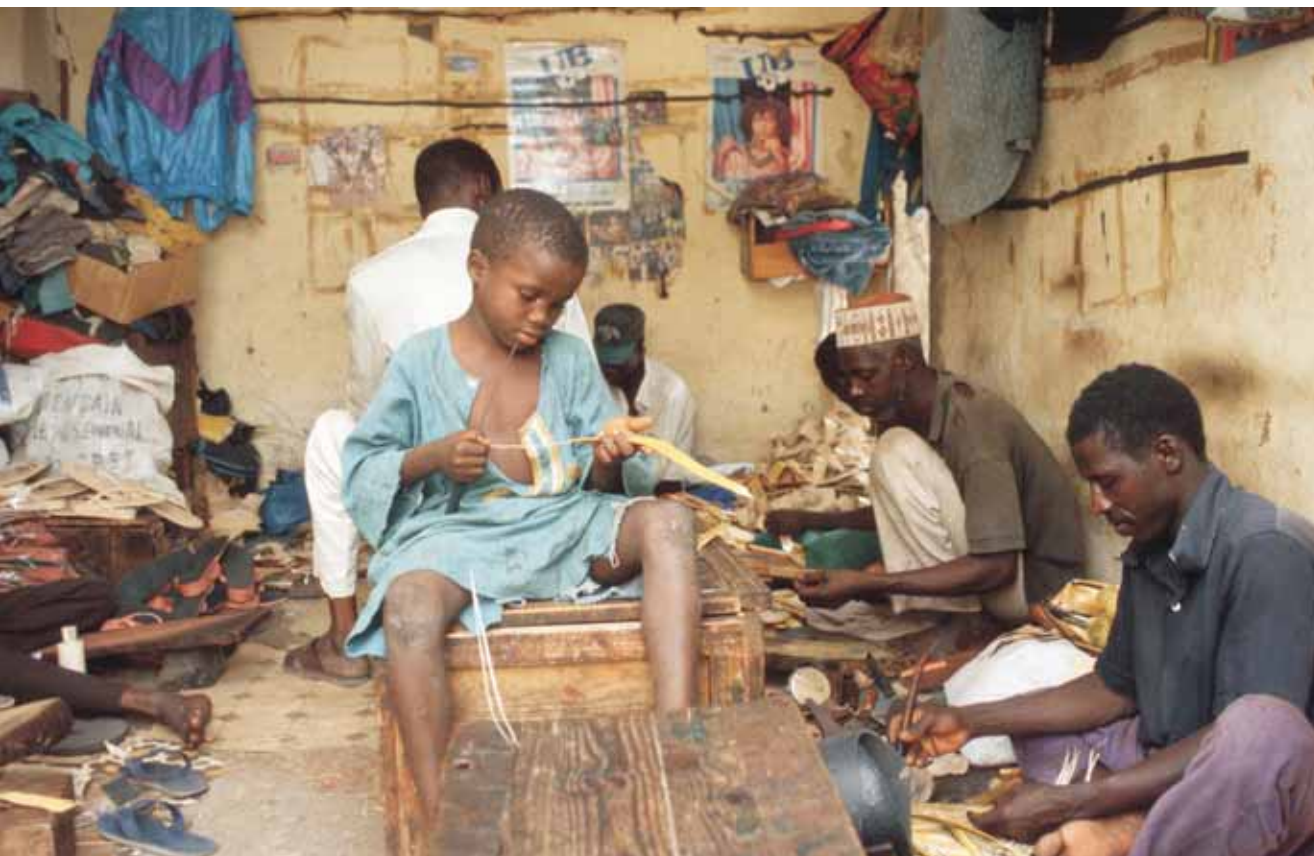


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debated the role of the talibé in the widespread begging seen in this region, and they discussed the gender aspects of work expectations. They had many ideas about ways in which public and private services could be enhanced.

Displacement was viewed by informants as the most important linkage between conflict and WFCL. Over a third of the parents interviewed said they had been displaced due to the conflict and had come to settle in the locations under study. Displaced families are in the most precarious position and see little alternative other than to put their children to work as soon as they are old enough to be productive. This can sometimes take the form of bartering children to repay debts accrued during the process of relocation. Displacement also leads to separation, forcing many children to fend for themselves. Respondents agree that it is not enough to unite or relocate families; they also need the additional support that allows them to protect and nurture their children.

A less obvious problem with displacement is that children and their families often find themselves crossing linguistic divides. Not speaking the language in the host community reduces economic opportunity and can lead to social marginalization. There is considerable linguistic diversity within Casamance and also between these areas and Guinea-Bissau to the south.

The research uncovered evidence that displacement poses significant threats to education:

- A mismatch has arisen between the geographical distribution of schools and the distribution of students. Schools in conflict areas are hardly utilized; those in resettlement areas are used beyond capacity.
- Like their students, teachers have also fled conflict areas, but they have not necessarily been re-employed in their new locations, especially since many have left Sénégal altogether. Instead, lesser-trained personnel are brought in to take their place.
- Extreme poverty and the disruptions of relocation cause children to seek work in place of schooling. Of the working children interviewed who had attended school in the past, nearly half said they had dropped out.

The problem of landmines is also seen as crucial. This is obvious in agricultural work, which assumes a new dimension of hazard, but respondents also pointed out that domestic work in rural areas often requires children to walk the roads and fields in search of wood and water. There is a widespread perception that work on cashew farms is extremely hazardous, but this does not prevent desperate families from returning for this work. Parents often bring their children with them when they travel for this purpose, or children are engaged directly.

It is interesting that the conflict itself - the threat of harm, coercion or recruitment by armed groups - is not considered by informants an instigator of WFCL, even though violence continues to trouble this region.

The principal insights that the Casamance experience offers to the broader study relate to displacement and unexploded ordnance - particularly landmines - as intensifying factors for the WFCL. It also suggests that the scale of these impacts corresponds to the scale of the conflict: the conflict in Casamance has proceeded at a relatively low level for the past decade or so, and this is reflected in an impact on child labour and education which is discernible, but broadly similar to that in more peaceful but similarly impoverished regions.



Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is, by any measure, one of the world's poorest countries, ranking 180th of 182 countries and territories according to the Human Development Index. It was ravaged by a violent and complex civil war for more than a decade, from 1991 to 2002, and recovery has been slow and difficult.

The war began when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) took up arms against the government in March 1991. The RUF methods were unsparing, including death and dismemberment of non-combatants so as to instill fear and coerce support. The government responded in kind, and the forcible recruitment of children, girls as well as boys, became a prominent aspect of the war. In 1997 a faction within the military, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), staged a coup. A year later this faction was deposed, and went into armed rebellion, creating a second anti-government front in the civil war. By the beginning of 2002, with assistance from Britain and the United Nations, both the RUF and AFRC had been pacified and the conflict ended. It is estimated that 50,000 people died during the eleven years of war and that about half of Sierra Leone's 4.5 million population were either internally displaced or forced out of the country. Although the country was spared extensive use of landmines, mass amputation was and remains a serious problem.



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The most recent statistical evidence on the situation of children in Sierra Leone comes from a Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) conducted in 2008. Twenty-one percent of children showed signs of malnourishment and 36.4 per cent were stunted. Only about half of all children were registered, and many families were not intact: the proportion of children not living with at least one biological parent rises from 15 percent for those under five to about a third for those aged from 10 to 14. The net primary school attendance ratio differs more by urban-rural residence than by gender; it is 76 per cent for urban children but only 56 per cent for those in the countryside. In 2008, of those in the 15 to 18-year age bracket, less than 9 per cent of females and 7 per cent of males had actually completed primary school.

As in education, child labour incidence is determined more by place of residence than by gender - it is about twice as high in rural areas compared to urban areas. A brief module on child labour activities was included in two surveys, MICS (2005) and Demographic and Health Surveys (2008) (UNICEF, 2010; ICF Macro, 2010). Taken together, the surveys indicate that between 30 and 50 per cent of all children are doing work that would be classified as child labour according to ILO Convention 138, with the bulk taking place in family enterprises; internal evidence suggests that the higher percentage may be more accurate. Indeed, because both surveys used only the previous week as the reference period, the true level of child labour is likely to be greater still.

Any overview of WFCL in Sierra Leone has to begin with diamond mining. Diamonds are a chief export of the country, and the mines played an important role in financing insurgency. Thousands of children worked the mines during the war years in conditions of virtual slavery, and children released from armed forces and groups joined them after peace was established. In 2004 it was thought that the number of children engaged in diamond mining numbered about 10,000, although by this time the extreme conditions of servitude had been lifted (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Sierra Leone, 2004)

Other significant occurrences of WFCL include:

- **Street children:** Fifteen-hundred children are believed to live on the streets of Freetown alone and are exposed to risks both from the activities they engage in to survive and the conditions of the street itself. Begging, often by or for amputees, is highly visible.
- **Trafficking:** This is believed to be relatively common in Sierra Leone, especially as a result of the widespread separation of children from their families. Trafficking to locations within the country may be more frequent than to other countries.
- **Child prostitution:** This involves primarily girls. Little is known about the overall incidence, but it seems to be relatively common among street children, girls who work at bars or nightclubs, and girls working in the vicinity of the diamond mines.
- **Domestic labour:** Girls are traditionally married at very early ages, often to much older men. This fosters an environment in which abusive domestic labour is given social approval. Girls are also at risk of being delivered to foreign employers for domestic service.
- **Other hazardous work:** Because of extreme poverty, dislocation, family separation and the legacy of amputations and other disabilities inherited from the war, children often enter into hazardous occupations at an early age, without regard as to whether or not work is safe for them.



The government of Sierra Leone has ratified the CRC and its two optional protocols, as well as the ACRWC. It has not yet ratified ILO Conventions 138 and 182, although it is in the process of doing so. The minimum age of employment is 15. Two post-conflict national laws, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2005) and the Child Rights Act (2007) commit the government to taking measures to counteract child trafficking and child labour. Enforcement capacity, however, remains weak. Perhaps the most effective programme undertaken to combat WFCL was the Countering Youth and Child Labour through Education (CYCLE) Programme of the International Rescue Committee, which was reaching approximately 30,000 children in Liberia and Sierra Leone prior to its phase-out in 2009 (US Department of Labor, 2010).

In order to extend the knowledge base regarding WFCL in Sierra Leone, the local study team chose two areas to survey: the capital city of Freetown in the west and the more rural district of Kono to the east; the latter includes the diamond-mining town of Koidu. Seventy children, 50 of whom are engaged in WFCL, were interviewed, along with 20 parents. Twenty employers were also selected, as well as 60 other key informants. Focus groups also drew in an additional 30 respondents. These interviews collected both qualitative and quantitative data.

The general view of respondents was that the extreme economic and social conditions engendered by conflict led to the widespread use of what have been recognized internationally as the worst forms of child labour. In addition to the immediate human cost of the war, businesses have been devastated, and employment opportunities are sparse and poorly paid. There is no backup support for children who have been separated from their families or for those whose families are unable to take care of them. In these circumstances employers, even those offering hazardous or otherwise inappropriate work to children, regard themselves as being "charitable".

Migration, especially from the countryside to more secure urban areas, has concentrated and exacerbated the social and economic costs of conflict. Even today, the study revealed that of 50 children chosen for their involvement in WFCL, only 14 lived with their families; 12 said they were the sole breadwinners for their families (some children live apart from their families but provide support). This corroborates evidence from another recent study in Sierra Leone, which reported that more than half of the out-of-school children it sampled were living with extended family members or unrelated adults (UNICEF, 2008). Massive migration from the Northern Province created differences between home and host ethnicities, further eroding the social networks essential to the support of children.

As in other post-conflict societies, cultural and political legacies play an important role in the prevalence of WFCL. Perhaps the most urgent problem is that the culture of impunity generated by the years of conflict still persists, mainly due to the slow rebuilding of civil and political institutions. This is particularly hard on girls. During the war, girls were abducted both for armed combat and prostitution. Today, they can still be raped with little likelihood of criminal penalties. After being stigmatized in this way, abused girls are more prone to enter prostitution.

Ironically, many of the parents and children cited the desire to gain an education as a reason for engaging in WFCL. Destitute families cannot otherwise afford the fees levied for school attendance, or the cost of books and uniforms. The complex relationship between child labour and school attendance in such circumstances calls out for further research.

Southern Sudan

Sudan's civil war was exceptionally violent and protracted. Armed conflict between the northern and southern portions of the country first broke out in 1955 and, after a truce lasting from 1973 to 1982, the conflict resumed until a settlement was negotiated in 2005. Nearly all of the conflict has occurred in the south: as many as two million non-combatants in Southern Sudan may have been killed during these four decades of violence, and nearly 5 million have been internally displaced. Much of the southern region harbours landmines, inhibiting the return of displaced people. Sporadic outbursts of violence continue, involving inter-ethnic disputes and cross-border attacks from Uganda, which continue to cause death and displacement. Enslavement, which flourished under wartime conditions, has diminished, but there are still an estimated 35,000 enslaved women and children in Southern Sudan. The country of Sudan as a whole ranks 150th in the Human Development Index; the southern region would no doubt rank lower, but comparable data do not exist.

The only survey-type investigation of social conditions in the southern region since the end of the conflict has been the education-focused Rapid Assessment of Learning Spaces, which was conducted in 2006 by UNICEF and the Government of Southern Sudan. Researchers counted the number of children enrolled in schools in Southern Sudan, but they did not know how many children were not in school. Nevertheless the average percentage reduction in the number of children from one grade to the next over the first five grades gives some indication: about a third, for both girls and boys. This is



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not necessarily an exact attrition rate, since more students may have begun schooling in later rather than earlier years, however it can be viewed as an upper bound. Only about a third of all enrolled students in this survey are girls - but, again, we do not know the population proportions. More recently, Save the Children has claimed that only 20 per cent of all children ever enrol in school, and only 2 per cent complete their primary education (Save the Children, 2010). The same rate of enrolment is given by the UN Human Rights Council's Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan for Warrap State, situated in the south.

Three related problems have dominated international attention in recent years: slavery, trafficking, and the use of children by armed combatants and related groups. Forces on both sides of the civil war are said to have abducted children, and the Lord's Resistance Army, a Ugandan entity, has engaged in similar activity during the past decade, operating across the border between Uganda and Southern Sudan. Their raids and abductions were continuing as recently as December 2009. A lack of support for reintegration of child combatants, meanwhile, has resulted in many of them returning to their militias (Othman, 2010). As mentioned above, child slavery continues to occur, and there is both commerce in slaves and economic exploitation of their labour (Global March, 2010).

Beyond this, few reliable numbers are available concerning humanitarian, social and economic conditions in the south. Only about a third of all children are registered, making systematic investigations difficult. According to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, the south has a semi-autonomous status with its own interim administration, but it has not yet established and staffed agencies to monitor or regulate internal conditions. The government of the north did not perform these functions in the south prior to 2005. Due to the conflict, international agencies have not conducted conventional social surveys in Southern Sudan, so we know little about the baseline conditions affecting children - their family status, their health, or their engagement in child labour. In this context, the current study is of great importance.

Before proceeding to the research itself, it is worth noting that the (central) government of Sudan has ratified ILO Conventions 138 and 182, as well as the CRC. It has not, however, ratified either of the two optional protocols to the CRC, nor the ACRWC. The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) promulgated a Child Act in 2008, which commits it to protect children against trafficking, slavery and economic exploitation, and which sets the minimum age for employment at 14. However the text of the Act has not yet been disseminated, nor has GoSS created an institutional framework for implementation. GoSS has, with its northern counterpart, established a Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission to accomplish these objectives for ex-combatants, but, as their return to militias implies, this process does not address the special needs of children within the target group. Various NGOs have worked at a local level to promote family reunification and education.

The Southern Sudan study team selected several regions within Juba County for data collection; these were relatively accessible and provided a diversity of ethnic groups. One hundred and twelve child labourers were interviewed, along with 12 parents of child labourers, 11 employers of children, and 29 key informants, most from civil society organizations. Interviews were semi-structured and provided ample opportunity for respondents to describe their experiences and observations in detail. Many of the narratives are compelling. Some of the themes that emerge from the data are:

- **Precarious family circumstances.** Nearly all of the children interviewed were living on the street, although their reasons for this varied. Some were separated from their

families, and lived with families that were unable to support them. Aside from general poverty, a significant cause of inadequate support was the death or disablement of parents, a common condition due to conflict. Even the traditional willingness of extended family members to take in children was insufficient to meet the need.

- **Culture of violence.** The extraordinary length and reach of the civil war has fundamentally altered the culture of the region, according to many informants. They point to the mimicry of war in children's games and the emergence of violent gangs among street children, some of them armed. These gangs engage in the drug trade and prostitution, as well as other illegal activities. Respondents agree that child prostitution in particular has become more common in the wake of the conflict, although they disagree as to the exact reasons.
- **Child trafficking and slavery.** In addition to the existing level of slavery, in recent years hundreds of children have been abducted for purposes of enslavement, mostly in inter-ethnic disputes. Since the main form of servitude appears to be herding, boys are at greatest risk. Girls may also be abducted and trafficked out of the country for sexual exploitation and domestic service, but the extent of this problem is not known. Anti-trafficking measures by GoSS are still in their early stages, and there is much controversy over the actions of foreign-based NGOs to purchase the freedom of individual children.
- **Other hazardous work.** In the absence of schools, parental support and traditional economic opportunities, children take what work they can find. In some areas, it appears that children may even constitute the majority of the labour force for industries like construction and portering. The data also point toward metal-working and motorcycle transport as especially hazardous. Respondents are dismayed by this, but they view it as inevitable under the circumstances.

While the current study represents a significant expansion of our knowledge regarding child labour and related aspects of children's experiences in Southern Sudan, it is clear that more research is urgently needed.



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Occupied Palestinian Territories

At the conclusion of the Six Day War in 1967, Israel assumed control of the West Bank (Jordan River) and Gaza Strip, which we will refer to as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The years since then have been marked by a series of conflicts, generally increasing in violence. Current conditions are particularly harsh in Gaza, due to an economic embargo and military actions in 2008-9, which claimed the lives of over 1,000 people.

The conflict within the territory of the OPT has been unusually multifaceted. It encompasses not only armed activities, but also house demolitions, the use of physical barriers and checkpoints, and extensive restrictions on commerce. For those caught up in the conflict, it has meant economic hardship, pervasive physical insecurity, and practical difficulty in carrying on normal daily activities. Nearly half of all OPT residents are refugees, comprising people of all generations.

The health conditions of Palestinian children are serious but not as extreme as those we encountered in the other case studies. Ten per cent of children under five years show signs of malnourishment, and about 3 per cent are underweight. This situation is also reflected in the Human Development Index, in which OPT ranks 110th, higher than all but one country in sub-Saharan Africa, and approximately in the middle of the (non-oil) Middle East and North African peer group. Eighty-seven per cent of primary-school age children are enrolled in school, but the number drops to 13 per cent for those of secondary-school age. Labour force survey data indicate that child labour is uncommon, with 6.7 per cent of children engaged in work of any kind. Care should be taken in interpreting this number, however, since the survey does not probe extensively into all possible work activities, and its sole reference period was the most recent week. It is likely that the true incidence of child labour is higher, but we cannot say by how much.

On the other hand, the difficulty in carrying on family and other businesses in the OPT works against an increase in the incidence of child labour: while poverty is associated with child labour, asset poverty has the opposite effect. A recent study found that child labour in the OPT is negatively associated with adult wages, except during Israeli border closures, which negatively affect the entire OPT labour market and result in noticeable increases in child labour (Di Maio & Nandi, 2009).

The conflict in the OPT, unlike in other conflicts investigated in this study, has not been characterized by significant levels of direct child recruitment. The OPT Child Law of 2004 prohibits the use of children in armed conflict, and this stipulation has been generally upheld by the various combatant groups, particularly since the middle years of the 2000-2010 decade.

The current study constitutes a pioneering attempt to investigate WFCL in the OPT. The local study team identified four regions for data collection: the Jordan Valley, East Jerusalem, Beit Hanoun and Rafah. The Jordan Valley and East Jerusalem are in the West Bank, with Beit Hanoun and Rafah in Gaza. The Jordan Valley and Beit Hanoun are largely agricultural, while the other two regions are urban. Taken together, they offer a representative cross-section of the entire OPT. Fifty children in each location were surveyed, two of whom were selected for more extensive interviewing, in which other household members also participated. In addition, 20 other key informants were interviewed.

The findings identified several types of WFCL that are causes for concern:

- **Tunneling.** Rafah is situated on the border between Gaza and Egypt. Because of the Israeli blockade, illegal tunnels are dug beneath this border for the trans-shipment of goods and sometimes arms. The work is intrinsically dangerous, made more so by Israeli attacks on suspected tunnel locations. It attracts children, however, because it pays more than nearly any other alternative employment.
- **Scavenging.** The sight of children sifting through debris at dumpsites is common throughout much of the world, but the effect of high-tech warfare in urban areas is to create a different type of debris site. Israel uses missiles to target individual structures; when they are demolished a pile of scrap material and damaged goods remains. Children then converge on these sites to rummage through the rubble. In addition to the risks common to all forms of scavenging, these children face the possibility of delayed structural collapse and unexploded ordnance. It is also notable that, of 120 "children of the street" surveyed in a different study in 2008, five (4.2 per cent) indicated that they were engaged in scavenging (Defence for Children International, Palestine Section, 2008).
- **Trafficking of drugs and guns.** Children are actively engaged in smuggling drugs and transporting or selling arms in all locations studied. While many of the causal factors may be similar to those seen in other countries, a complication is introduced by the system of military checkpoints. Children generally have greater ease of passage through these checkpoints than adults, making them valuable to smugglers.



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- **Agriculture.** Agricultural workers in Gaza are vulnerable to military attacks; on the West Bank they are exposed to attacks from Israeli settlers. Some children work as agricultural labourers for the settlers themselves, where their working conditions are not protected by laws enforced within Israel proper. These findings corroborate an earlier report that as many as 1,900 children, and perhaps more, provide illegal agricultural labour for Israeli settlements (Korkus, 2008).
- **Other hazardous work.** Children in the OPT are exposed to hazardous activities for similar reasons to children elsewhere - early exit from school, lack of economic alternatives, and lack of awareness in the wider community. The retardation of economic development, due to political as well as military conflict, also prolongs the use of older, less sophisticated industrial technologies that are more conducive to child employment. Specific activities mentioned by informants include construction, portering, fuel delivery, and industrial production in small workshops.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has taken steps to address child labour issues in the OPT. The Labour Law of 2000 and the Child Law of 2004 incorporate many elements of the two ILO child labour conventions and the CRC. A weakness of the CRC, however, is that it does not apply where the employer is an immediate relative of the child, which is the case in most instances of child labour in the OPT. It is said that the PA is in the process of amending this law. The PA has also partnered with UNICEF to establish a Child Rights National Plan of Action, which would encompass child labour as well as other infringements on children's rights. On the other hand, institutions of public administration in the OPT remain weak, and currently there is no mechanism to enforce existing statutes.

3. THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING FROM THE STUDY

Pathways and markers

The ultimate goal of this study is to integrate an awareness of child labour, and particularly its worst forms, into policies and interventions undertaken in societies recovering from conflict. As mentioned in the introduction, it is beyond the scope of this effort to establish causal relationships or even settled facts in this domain. Rather, the work is exploratory and offers suggestions for potential impacts of conflict on child labour that may or may not materialize in any particular setting. In this spirit, we offer a set of possible causal pathways drawn from the country experiences. For each of them we identify patterns or conditions (markers) that may indicate that the pathways are actually in operation.

1. **Displacement as socioeconomic shock.** In every country we examined, conflict was associated with displacement of families. Respondents were virtually unanimous in viewing this condition as a contributor to the incidence of WFCL. It is worth inquiring more closely into this factor, since understanding the specific mechanisms that lead from displacement to child labour may inform programmes that try to return families to their former homes, or support them in new locations.

We know from the extensive literature on child labour that shocks to family well-being, quite apart from poverty in a general sense, are a major cause of children leaving school and/or entering inappropriate forms of work. Their labour is effectively a buffer, available when other buffers fail. No doubt sudden displacement functions in such a manner. Most households have few resources to fall back on when they lose their homes and livelihoods, and conditions of violent conflict intensify the shock. Parents may be killed or maimed, the process of fleeing is highly stressful, and in multi-ethnic societies displaced households may find their host communities culturally and linguistically foreign.

The risk of bonded child labour in particular increases if displaced families are forced to incur debts in order to survive the transition to their new environment. As we saw in Casamance, the labour of children may well serve as collateral for such loans, and in several of our cases domestic labour, particularly of girls, was bartered for emergency support.

Thinking of displacement as a shock leads one to ask what could be potential shock-absorbers. The availability of credit at reasonable cost would be one possible buffer, yet in the case study areas this was not available. Few countries could provide a basic safety net that can cushion against shocks of this magnitude. Extended family networks provide that function for some families, but even in countries with a long history of such networks like Southern Sudan, widespread conflict can cause them to break apart.

A number of markers for WFCL suggest themselves. Obviously the extent of displacement itself is the single most important factor, but one can also consider such secondary questions as (a) whether families had time to organize their



departures, (b) whether the home and host regions are culturally similar, (c) how many possessions families were able to take with them, and (d) how much economic and social "space" was available in the host communities. In many cases, the number of displaced girls placed into domestic labour may serve as an indicator of the broader social crisis, as well as constituting a serious child labour problem in its own right.

2. **Cultural impacts of conflict.** The changes effected by violent conflict in a society's culture are often subtle and difficult to quantify, but they can undermine the social norms that would otherwise limit the spread of WFCL. The precariousness of life in times of war tends to shorten the time horizon of children and their parents and inure them to the risks posed by hazardous work. Child gangs mimic actual militias, as Sudanese informants observed, and further imperil life on the street. This adds risk to outdoor work performed by children and opens up additional pathways to smuggling, prostitution and other illicit activities.

The direct cultural manifestations of conflict also interact with the effects of displacement. Support networks essential for children, including extended families and traditional community leadership, are fragmented when populations are compelled to flee. Thus displaced children face an especially difficult situation: they must turn to less familiar adults at the same time that adult attitudes have hardened and become less protective. Not surprisingly, many children conclude they cannot rely on adult institutions at all.



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A reciprocal problem also arises when, in the aftermath of conflict, many children become aggressively hostile to adult guidance; a development our informants frequently commented on. This can present an impediment to family reunification, as we will see, and it can be problematic in its own right, particularly if it leads to an increase in juvenile crime. For many informants, a rise in child rebelliousness contributes to a general sense of cultural shock and dislocation.

Special mention should be made of the situation faced by girls. It is all too common during times of conflict for girls to be abducted by armed groups and used as prostitutes. If the post-conflict setting remains lawless, as it sometimes does, girls remain at risk of abduction and rape, as respondents pointed out in Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, even if they are forced into sex against their will, this experience often stigmatizes them in the eyes of their community. The result is that these girls, and even in some instances girls in general, are viewed as suitable for prostitution. While laws against such practices are necessary, in the absence of a strong community, ethic laws alone cannot succeed.

How can outsiders gauge if the norms of conflict have become embedded in culture? One possibility is to be aware of the prevalence of imagery that is militaristic, including in the play of children. Parents in several countries pointed to the way uniforms, toy weapons and military hierarchy had lodged themselves in children's imaginations. Observation of the extent to which child prostitution is practiced openly, rather than being hidden for fear of discovery, is another indicator of embedded conflict norms. Researchers in several countries had little difficulty in identifying and interviewing child prostitutes—an indication that social resistance to this practice was weak.

3. **Breakdown of the rule of law.** The conflicts we have surveyed are, in every instance, episodes of lawlessness: brute force has assumed control. As conflict recedes, law may reclaim its social role, but this process takes time and resources. Many of the conflicts, moreover, have an ethnic dimension, and inter-ethnic hostility can limit the reach of the law even in times of peace. This has been seen in Southern Sudan and, in very different circumstances, in the failure of regulation to protect Palestinian children working for Israeli settlements.

In places where social norms have been eroded, laws tend to be fragile, so it is necessary to emphasize the importance of laws. Nations come together to create charters and conventions and laws pertaining to work and child rights at the country level, and harmful child labour cannot be overcome without these laws. In lawless environments WFCL can proceed unchecked. The evidence for this claim can be found throughout the country reports in the current study.

Little needs to be said about gauging the degree to which laws are generally enforced; this is something nearly every local resident, including children, knows. The limitations to the rule of law stemming from communal or ethnic hostilities, however, may be very specific: laws might be enforced everywhere except in particular locations, or enforced selectively depending on the ethnic group. Such circumstances are more difficult to recognize. There may in fact be no substitute for detailed knowledge of the way the social and economic map of a region intersects its ethnic map.



4. **Family separation.** In most of the countries examined in this study, dislocation was chaotic and resulted in widespread separation of children from their parents. This had the immediate effect of putting children on the street, where both their survival activities and their surrounding environment pose huge risks. Some children were taken in by unrelated families, but usually for the exchange of domestic labour - another source of potential risk. Separated children are also vulnerable to abduction and servitude.

Reuniting children with their families is difficult in societies where many or even most are not registered, which, as we have seen, is a common state of affairs. Separation itself creates psychological barriers between the generations: after a period on their own, children may not want to go back, and parents may not accept them. Parents may also remain in the grip of their own relocation crisis and be unable to offer their children support. The unfortunate conclusion is that, while separation contributes to WFCL, reunification is not always a feasible solution.

Family separations are commonly estimated from household surveys and rapid assessments. A low rate of registration may well be a consequence of separation as well as a factor impeding reunification. Of course, an influx of street children in host regions is also an obvious indicator that families have fragmented.

5. **Prevalence of firearms.** Post-conflict disarmament is normally viewed as a core aspect of demobilizing militias, but weapons in the hands of non-combatants presents a problem as well. We have seen, in the case of Angola, that guns can find their way to children, leading to gang dynamics that exacerbate several of the worst forms of child labour: harsher conditions on the street, recruitment into illicit activities, and a general threat to the security of children whose work takes them outside their homes. This is the only documented example in the current study, but the likelihood of this pathway in other countries suggests that further research is urgently needed.
6. **Legacy of landmines.** These constitute an immediate hazard to children working in agriculture or travelling through rural areas to procure water or fuel. The threat of landmines is already well understood, but the current study provides further documentation.
7. **Conflict debris and scavenging.** In one of our study regions, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, a new dimension to scavenging has been opened with children sorting through the debris of buildings that have been targeted for destruction. Not only do they face the risks familiar from dump sites, they also face the possibility that structurally damaged buildings will collapse on them. While this is just one case, it may reflect the face of the future: "smart" missiles and similar weapons now play a central role in conflicts involving the most technologically advanced military powers.

Attention should be given to demolished structures in the immediate aftermath of an attack. Are these sites being secured by public authorities? Or do they remain accessible to impoverished children who will sort through the debris for saleable items, even at great personal risk?

8. **Mobility and transport under conditions of insecurity.** The emphasis in this study is on the post-conflict setting, but conflict persists in several of the regions investigated. Under these conditions, there are often barriers to the movement of goods and people: official barriers as in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and



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security risks in portions of Casamance and Southern Sudan. Particularly in OPT the use of children to negotiate these barriers has been documented: children are found working in tunnels in Rafah and passing through checkpoints in the West Bank for work and commerce. Of course, the use of children as couriers in the midst of conflict is well known. Whether children play similar roles in the less severe, but not trivial, security conditions in countries with lower-level conflict requires further research.

9. **Conflict and education: the mediating role of child labour.** The international commitment to universalizing access to education is encapsulated in the Education for All (EFA) initiative. The goals of EFA include free compulsory primary education for every child, improved educational quality, education that meets future adult needs, and gender parity; all of these are imperilled by conflict and are closely related to the need to curb child labour. The relationship between conflict and education will be a key theme in the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report, for which UNESCO is the lead agency. One of the purposes of undertaking the current research on conflict and the worst forms of child labour is to contribute to the knowledge base from which this report will be able to draw. Since previous research has shown that child labour and participation in education are mutually determining, it is likely that illuminating the connection between child labour and conflict will also improve our understanding of the influence of conflict on education.



Conflict adds a further dimension to both education and child labour. Access to schooling is disrupted in numerous ways: schools are demolished, teachers are often targeted by combatants, large-scale relocation creates a mismatch between school and student locations, government resources are diverted, and multiple age students are crowded into the same facilities. On the household side, conflict-generated poverty inhibits enrollment when families can no longer afford school costs or must rely on their children to work excessive hours. In the chaos of displacement, families may be unable to sustain continuity of education or even remain intact at all.

Given these factors, which have been documented in other studies, what does the current study add to our understanding of the specific role that child labour, and particularly its worst forms, plays in conflict settings?

In practical terms, the main issue appears to be the imperative of resuming education for children forced to suspend schooling as a result of conflict. The evidence is clear that conflict causes an immediate drop in the proportion of school-age children actually attending school. While every effort should be taken to minimize this effect, it is inevitable that education will be disrupted when violence flares. Most efforts on the ground have centered on speeding recovery in post-conflict settings: rebuilding schools and recruiting teachers, while providing

relief to families so they can once again afford to have their children educated.

It is in this context that the role of child labour needs to be addressed. A consistent finding in the current study is that child labourers, especially those engaged in WFCL, are far less likely to attend school. In itself, this is not surprising, nor does it demonstrate causation. Nevertheless, if the goal is to return children to school, much depends on the direction their lives take during the period of educational disruption. At this point we can offer only circumstantial evidence that (1) conflict and post-conflict settings significantly increase the risk that children will be drawn into WFCL, (2) engagement in WFCL has long-lasting effects on the emotional development and self-perception of children, and (3) transitions from education to WFCL are predominantly one-way. A reasonable hypothesis is that the disruptions to educational progress associated with conflict are more difficult to reverse because of the movement of children into WFCL.



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Recommendations

Many recommendations on combatting WFCL can be found in previous ILO documents; the purpose of this final section is to expand briefly on the implications of the study project on child labour and conflict.

1. **Enhance support for displaced families.** Support need not only take the form of cash or in-kind payments; it can also include the provision of social services and facilitation of mutual self-help networks. Perhaps non-profit or public institutions can make long-term, low-interest loans available, so that families in emergency situations do not have to borrow from other households, or use the labour of their children as collateral. A gender component could include measures to reduce the placement of girls in host families as domestic servants. For instance, some portion of cash transfers or other support could be made conditional on children, and especially girls, remaining within the household.
2. **Counteract the cultural impacts of conflict.** Militaristic gang activity on the part of children should be regarded as a serious social problem, to be addressed by alternative social activities, such as organized sports and music. Curricula that call attention to and oppose abusive or exploitative gender roles should be developed for school systems, and girls should have counsellors or other role models they can readily talk to if they feel they are being pressured into situations, like premature marriage, domestic service, or work at bars or nightclubs. The longstanding cultural traditions of societies that have recently undergone conflict are important resources for restoring a climate of respect and generosity, but they may need to be actively mobilized.
3. **Restore the rule of law.** It is not enough to establish lawful control over armed parties; law needs to be established at the community level as well. Those who egregiously abuse or exploit children need to be accountable, and children as well as parents need to have confidence that, if they complain about unlawful behaviour, their concerns will be addressed. Everyday adherence to law must especially be promoted in employment and other relationships between ethnic or communal groups that exist in a state of tension. Bottom-up approaches to the restoration of law that begin with issues like WFCL may achieve common ground more readily than top-down approaches that target the legal status of entire populations.
4. **Promote family reunification, but provide for independent children.** The first step towards making unification possible for more families is to achieve the maximum possible rate of registration. Beyond this, incentives can be offered for those who help bring children and parents back together: children reunited with their families are less likely to be drawn onto the streets and into WFCL. At the same time, it should be recognized that many children will not be reunited - one policy does not fit all family types or circumstances. As we have seen, once children have lived independently on the streets, they may not wish to rejoin their families, nor is it always the case that their families will take them back. Moreover, extreme poverty and intra-family conflict sometimes render the ideal of reuniting little more than a hope. In such cases it is essential that there be alternative living and support opportunities, such as shelters, supervised communal facilities and boarding schools. Funding should not just be sufficient to reach all children currently living on their own, it should be able to obviate the need for them to engage in WFCL to survive.



5. **Disarm society, not only militias.** Disarmament programmes should offer sufficient incentives to remove weapons not only from combatant groups, but also from entire communities. Under no circumstances should children have access to firearms.
6. **Protect children from landmines.** Of course, landmines should be cleared as rapidly and completely as possible. However, even under the best of circumstances the process will be slow. As the example of Angola has shown, even after a decade the threat of landmines may persist. Interim measures to protect children are therefore essential. Agricultural work in mine-infested regions should be included under hazard orders in accordance with Convention 138, and children should be discouraged from taking part in this work. Schools should introduce curricula that explain the risks of landmines to children and teach children how to identify and avoid them.
7. **Secure conflict debris.** Debris from bombings or other military actions should not be accessible to children for purposes of scavenging. Public authorities should secure these sites as soon as possible; removal and sorting of debris should be work for trained and properly protected adults.
8. **Remove children from insecure transit and commerce sites.** Ideally, there should be no legal, physical or security impediments to the normal movement of goods and people. In conflict settings, however, this ideal is not achieved. Even so, it is important that children not be preferentially used as couriers, porters, route-finders (such as tunnelers) or migrant workers when barriers to movement are imposed. This will be difficult to enforce, but clear recognition in law and community awareness raising can help.
9. **Children scarred by conflict need a second chance.** There is a consensus that it is not enough to disband children who have been directly employed in armed conflict; reintegration services must also be provided. The same awareness should be given to children whose family, education and work lives have been disrupted by conflict: they need help extricating themselves from exploitative conditions and the opportunity to reclaim their dreams for a better future. This document has focused specifically on the predicament of children whose education has been disrupted by conflict and displacement. They should not be written off; rather, every effort should be made to divert or remove them from WFCL and assist them in resuming their education under conditions of security and stability.

The study found that one of the main challenges in pursuing this goal is achieving stability of funding for education during the transitional phase. In the immediate post-conflict period there is often an infusion of support from international agencies, foreign governments and other external donors. This support cannot last, and it soon recedes, often in a stop-and-go pattern. Genuine restoration of opportunity for children caught in the worst forms of child labour, not to mention the rebuilding of educational program for all children, takes many years, and cannot depend on temporary injections of aid. This implies that domestic budgetary priorities should be reviewed before the predictable reductions in external support actually occur.

The content of education too will require more attention. The desirable balance in the classroom between standard academic topics and those with more immediate practical use can shift as a result of the need for reconstruction in the wake of conflict. Children have a contribution to make in rebuilding infrastructure and restoring livelihoods. If they are to participate in a way that does not prejudice

their future roles in society - if they are to be released from the worst forms of child labour or not entrapped in them to begin with - it is best that this effort be combined with education, whether vocational or more traditionally academic. Apprenticeship can also provide a framework, provided it meets the standards set forth in Convention 138, which guarantee that it is age-appropriate, non-exploitative, and truly oriented to skill acquisition. While the best approach will, as always, depend on local conditions, our informants were nearly unanimous in calling for reforms to make education more relevant to the urgent needs of post-conflict reconstruction.

10. **Coordination of effort.** Most of the above recommendations require coordination across government ministries: they are multidimensional in nature, embracing labour, education, social, and economic realms. Typically, a national action plan or a major initiative that depends on the widespread mobilization of resources originates in a particular agency or ministry, where it finds its most enthusiastic support. On paper, other units may be indicated as collaborating, but it is often the case that they have competing priorities. As a result, we have found that building consensus among different ministerial departments is an ongoing process, one that needs to continue well after the initial agreements have been signed. One way to encourage broader inter-governmental support for initiatives in child labour and education is to promote a longer time horizon in development planning: if development is viewed in years, or even decades, it becomes clear that investments in children pay the highest returns.



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Recommendations for future research












Because of time and resource limitations, this study could not test hypotheses regarding conflict and child labour. It was possible only to propose patterns and processes that might characterize these situations and which should be kept in mind by future researchers and practitioners. In this final section of the report, we identify specific areas where further research is especially needed.

1. **Comparison group analysis of conflict and child labour.** To advance knowledge in a reliable way, it is necessary to have data on control and treatment groups. In this context, this would mean having either historical data within the same societies that predate conflict, or data on child labour in societies that are similar in most respects but, due to geography or political circumstances, have been sheltered from conflict. On this basis it would be possible to draw inferences regarding the way conflict alters the role of promoting and protecting factors that operate in both contexts. It may also be possible to measure the effect of less tangible cultural factors, where these differ across comparison groups.
2. **Longitudinal profiles of displacement, education and child labour.** It would be extremely useful to have better data on the sequence of events that characterizes displacement: how education is disrupted, transitions from education to work, and the factors that determine the likelihood that children will resume education after relocation. In particular, we need a better understanding of the role of WFCL in altering the probability of reverse transitions back into schooling.
3. **Better accounting for the status of children subject to displacement.** Here the pertinent questions are: What pathways do children follow during displacement, especially when they are separated from their families? What factors increase the likelihood that they will end up on the street? What alternative pathways exist for separated children that do not lead them to homelessness and WFCL?
4. **Modes of conflict and children's work.** Conflict takes many different forms. Weaponry, strategy, geographic diffusion, the financing of armed groups and other variables have concrete impacts on the risks faced by working children. We see this in many contexts, from landmines to drone attacks, restrictions on mobility, and forced draft labour in mining and export agriculture. It would be helpful to have much richer information, spanning a large set of cases that could link specific types of conflict to risks for child workers. This could alert those working to protect these children to problems that might otherwise go unnoticed.
5. **Child domestic work and conflict.** The dual nature of child domestic work - its traditionally accepted place in extended family and other networks and its potential for exploitation and abuse - has been the subject of a large and growing research literature. The balance between its benign and hazardous aspects may be different in societies emerging from conflict, however. This may be due to the greater number of children placed in such work, the enhanced vulnerability of these children and their families, and the potential for greater economic stress on host families. Difficult-to-measure cultural shifts can also play a role. More research is needed to differentiate these factors in post-conflict settings, especially in light of the importance of domestic work in the lives of girls.



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