

# UNSPEAKABLE CRIMES AGAINST **CHILDREN**

Sexual violence  
in conflict

NO CHILD  
**BORN TO DIE**



**Save the Children**

# UNSPEAKABLE CRIMES AGAINST **CHILDREN**

Sexual violence in conflict

Save the Children works in more than 120 countries.  
We save children's lives. We fight for their rights.  
We help them fulfil their potential.

## Acknowledgements

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Please note: This report contains distressing reports and quotes from children affected by sexual violence in conflict. All names throughout the report have been changed to protect identities.

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Cover photo: Emma was raped by an armed soldier on her way to work in the fields. She's 12. Emma didn't get medical assistance after she was attacked because fighting in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo made it unsafe to travel to the health clinic. (Photo: Save the Children)

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## MADELEINE, 16

Madeleine and her older sister were taken from their home in a village in the Democratic Republic of Congo by two soldiers. They were forced to walk for four hours and then raped.

*“Two soldiers came to our house. They had guns and they stole all the money we had.*

*“Then they took me and my sister and told us they were going to kill us. My parents couldn’t do anything because the soldiers had guns. I was so scared.*

*“They walked me and my sister in silence into the bush. It took four hours and they were hitting us with their guns to make us walk faster. It was night-time. I kept falling over in the mud because it was so dark.*

*“We arrived at their place in the bush. There were other soldiers there. They were saying things to*

*me and my sister but I didn’t understand because they were speaking in another language. A soldier took my sister away. Another soldier then took me and raped me. I was thinking, ‘Will I ever be able to go home again? Maybe I’ll get pregnant. If I do – what will happen? What will I do?’*

*“After that they took me back to my sister and let us go. I was very upset and in a lot of pain.*

*“I haven’t told my friends. I don’t know how they would react. Maybe I would get a bad reputation in my village. But my family knows and they support me.*

*“It has happened to other girls. When there is conflict, women and girls suffer a lot. We must teach the government and the leaders so that the soldiers don’t do these things.”*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“I can’t forget what happened. My head is full of these things – what happened to my friends, my family. It’s not peaceful in my head.”*

– Aissatou,<sup>1</sup> aged 15, reflecting on events in Mali in early 2012<sup>2</sup>

*“I want to tell the world that we need peace – stop the war. We need to make sure children and women are protected. People who rape need to be arrested.”*

– Félicité, aged 13, who was raped in the Democratic Republic of Congo after being displaced from her village in December 2012<sup>3</sup>

Sexual violence is one of the most horrific crimes committed during conflict. No one should have to endure the pain and humiliation of rape and sexual exploitation and violence, and it is particularly deplorable when a child is subjected to this brutality.

The prevalence in conflict of sexual violence against children is shocking. Save the Children’s research and programming experience indicates that girls especially but also boys under the age of 18 often make up the majority of survivors of sexual violence in conflict and conflict-affected countries; sometimes more than 80% of those affected by sexual violence are children.<sup>4</sup>

In countries across the world where Save the Children works – Afghanistan, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar (Burma), the occupied Palestinian territory, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria – and in refugee camps, including those in Ethiopia and Kenya, thousands of girls and boys are subject to sexual violence.

Sexual violence may be committed by armed groups, gangs and/or governmental armed forces. Children are also victims of sexual violence in detention and are recruited and/or used by armed forces and groups for sexual purposes. They may become the ‘property’ of one or more fighters, to whom they provide sexual services, or act as ‘wives’ to individual fighters.

But sexual violence in times of war is also committed by family members, community members, other

children, teachers, religious leaders, peacekeepers and humanitarian staff – trusted people from all walks of life. In countries where women and girls are already heavily discriminated against, young girls face the greatest threat. They are particularly exposed to high levels of rape, but also early or forced marriage and unintended pregnancy. Although less apparent, sexual violence against boys is also common. Both girls and boys are often reluctant to report the crime, because of the social stigma and fear of retribution.

High levels of sexual violence plague children in post-conflict situations, too, as they are subjected to violations including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The impact of sexual violence on children is catastrophic – physically, psychologically and socially. Children who have been victims of sexual violence are often left with serious physical injuries, which can be particularly severe because their growing bodies are not yet fully developed. Damage to children’s reproductive systems can leave them incontinent, infertile and condemned to a lifetime of bleeding and pain. They are at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including syphilis, gonorrhoea and HIV. Girls who become pregnant can suffer life-threatening complications during childbirth, will often be forced to drop out of school, and can face social exclusion and stigmatisation. Their chances for further education, livelihoods and marriage may be severely diminished or completely eliminated, condemning them to a lifetime of extreme poverty and increased vulnerability to further exploitation. For the thousands of children who survive sexual violence, the key priority is to try to recover from the trauma. Too often, however, there is little or no appropriate response to their needs, and this deepens their suffering immeasurably. Even worse, we know a great deal about how to protect children from sexual violence, even in emergencies, but lack of political will and funding means we aren’t always able to put in place sufficient programming.

In 2013 there is a historic opportunity to change the way the world thinks about sexual violence in conflict: during its leadership of the G8, the UK government (and Foreign Secretary William Hague in particular) has made a commitment to prioritise the issue of sexual violence in conflict. William Hague has described sexual violence in conflict as “our generation’s slave trade”: a complex issue that was once seen to be unsolvable but was eventually addressed with the help of concerted international action.

But there is a danger that even with this welcome leadership, the opportunity to make real progress on the ground will be missed unless we address the specific challenges facing children. We are calling on the G8 countries to take the following action:

### 1 Place children at the centre of international action on sexual violence in conflict

Children, and especially girls, often make up the majority of survivors of sexual violence in conflict, but their particular needs are too frequently neglected. To ensure that this doesn’t happen, *we are calling on the G8 countries to place children at the centre of international action on sexual violence in conflict.*

When we consider the problem of sexual violence in conflict from the perspective of children, it also becomes clear that preventing sexual violence from becoming widespread in conflict in the first place should be at the top of our priority list. Preventive measures include a wide range of activities, from providing adequate lighting in refugee camps, building toilets inside camps and buildings and ensuring access to education and shelter; to securing a change in attitudes and behaviours by tackling discrimination against women and girls.

### 2 Fund the protection of children and the prevention of violence

In spite of increasing international attention to the issue of sexual violence in conflict, there remains a severe lack of funding and political priority for preventing and responding to sexual violence (and other protection concerns) on the ground in conflict-affected countries. Our analysis shows, for example, that only 22% of humanitarian funding needs for the protection sector were met in 2011. This should be seen as essential, not optional, and receive the same level of priority as other sectors such as food, shelter

## HUMANITARIAN FUNDING BY SECTOR IN 2011

		Funding needs (\$US)	Commitments/ contributions (\$US)	%	Gap between funding and commitments
1	Food	2,848,202,388	2,257,011,715	79	591,190,673
2	Coordination and support services	603,597,993	392,401,072	65	211,196,921
3	Health	1,228,381,112	787,218,660	64	441,162,452
4	Safety and security of staff and operations	7,270,516	4,099,367	56	3,171,149
5	Agriculture	771,350,586	384,924,176	50	386,426,410
6	Water and sanitation	745,971,596	340,419,671	46	405,551,925
8	Multi-sector	999,783,070	451,601,069	45	548,182,001
7	Education	305,981,906	136,518,374	45	169,463,532
10	Mine action	62,715,909	25,476,855	41	37,239,054
11	Shelter and non-food items	399,089,308	147,445,839	37	251,643,469
12	Economic recovery and infrastructure	305,978,894	88,709,973	29	217,268,921
13	<b>Protection/human rights/rule of law</b>	<b>639,040,697</b>	<b>140,709,422</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>498,331,275</b>
15	Sector not specified	–	486,926,155	N/A	486,926,155
<b>Total</b>		<b>8,917,363,975</b>	<b>5,643,462,348</b>		
<b>Average</b>				<b>48</b>	

and water. Save the Children's experience shows that sexual violence is not an inevitable part of conflict and that barriers can be built between children and violence. When sufficient funding and priority is attached to the protection sector, programmes across what we call the Deliver–Empower–Change–Reform<sup>5</sup> spectrum can prevent and respond to sexual violence in ways that address the particular needs and vulnerabilities of children. *We are therefore also calling on G8 countries to ensure that funding to protect children is prioritised in every humanitarian response.*

### **3 End impunity for sexual violence against children**

In contexts where state authority has collapsed due to conflict, laws are no longer enforced and combatants or civilians can commit sexual violence, usually with complete impunity. Prosecutions for sexual violence in conflict affected countries are not prioritised on either global or national levels, and survivors face many hurdles in seeking accountability. *G8 countries should exert maximum pressure on governments and/or armed groups to respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, by immediately halting all acts of rape and other sexual violence and recruitment or use of children, and to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice; by ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC); and by strengthening national*

laws and policies relevant to rape and sexual violence and to ensure that international criminal law as codified in the Rome Statute is incorporated into national law. G8 countries should also assist efforts at documenting sexual violence, for example, by making available expert investigators, with a view to ensuring accountability.

### **4 Ensure the UN has the mandate, capacity and resources to play its role in protecting children from sexual violence**

UN peacekeeping troops, for example, must have a clear mandate to provide effective protection to civilians, and must prioritise the protection and promotion of children's rights. The UK is currently the lead on the UN Security Council on protection of civilians, and therefore has a particular window of opportunity to influence now. Also, the coordination mechanisms of the UN that can play a role in preventing sexual violence in conflict are chronically under-financed. With minimal additional resources, the UN coordination mechanisms could work more effectively to prevent sexual violence in conflict from becoming widespread. *G8 countries should ensure that all parts of the UN that can play a role in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict have the necessary resources, skills and political backing to tackle the issue.*



## SANDRA, 15

Sandra lives in an area of a city in Colombia that is known for the presence of armed groups, conflict and violence. When Sandra was five she was raped by her uncle.

*“I have lived here for 13 years and every day there is more conflict, more trouble for children. Before they used to respect children but now they don’t care whether they’re children, babies, pregnant mothers – they still kill them.*

*“And it’s common that gang members rape girls.*

*“I have been raped. I was five years old. My mother was working and my father too and my older sister was studying. So I was with my uncle. He gave dinner to my two little sisters but he didn’t give me dinner. We went to bed – me with my sisters but I couldn’t sleep so he took me to his room. He raped me.*

*“The next day my mother was helping me take a bath and there was blood. My mother asked me what had happened so I told her everything. We reported my uncle. He was captured and put in jail but then he escaped. Now he is in the streets.*

*“It’s very difficult to explain to you how it makes you feel. The school helped me with psychological help but I still haven’t confronted it completely. I can’t forget it. I try to feel the same way as other children but it’s difficult.”*

For the past two years, Sandra has been attending a project supported by Save the Children, where children learn about their rights and have opportunities to express themselves through writing, drawing, dance, theatre and music.

# PART I

# UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN CONFLICT

During conflict and instability, children<sup>6</sup> are exceptionally vulnerable to a wide range of human rights abuses and protection risks: separation from their families; detention; forced displacement; torture; lack of food and shelter; lack of access to health and education services; abduction; recruitment and use by armed forces or groups; rape, and sexual abuse and exploitation.

Sexual violence is defined for the purposes of this report as any act, attempt or threat of a sexual nature that results, or is likely to result, in the physical, psychological or emotional harm of an individual, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. This includes rape, incest, harassment, forced prostitution, sexual slavery and sex trafficking.<sup>7</sup>

# I WHAT IS THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM?

When we consider that 75–95% of rapes are never reported to the police in England,<sup>8</sup> it should come as no surprise that we know little about the full extent of sexual violence committed in conflict and post-conflict settings.

The problem of sexual violence against children is enough of a scourge even in countries that are not conflict-affected: the UN estimates that up to 50% of sexual assaults *worldwide* are committed against girls aged under 16.<sup>9</sup> One of the few global studies of the sexual abuse of children across a number of countries – mostly rich countries that are not experiencing conflict – found that 21.2% of females and 10.7% of males were victims of sexual abuse between the ages of zero to 18; this means an average of nearly 16% of all children.<sup>10</sup> If we apply these global child sexual abuse prevalence rates just to the population of children living in conflict-affected countries, we can estimate that nearly 30 million children have been or will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.<sup>11</sup> And it may well be more.

The few figures available and Save the Children's experience in conflict-affected countries indicate that children – especially girls but also boys – often make up the majority of survivors of sexual violence in conflict-affected countries.<sup>12</sup> In some cases, more than 80% of those affected by sexual violence in conflict-affected countries are children:

- In Sierra Leone, more than 70% of the sexual violence cases seen by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) were girls under 18, and more than 20% of those were girls under 11.<sup>13</sup> Another estimate from the conflict period estimates that as many as 215,000 to 257,000 Sierra Leonean women and girls may have been subjected to sexual violence.<sup>14</sup>
- In post-conflict Liberia, 83% of survivors of gender-based violence in 2011–12 were younger than 17, and almost all of these cases involved rape.<sup>15</sup>

- In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2008, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) recorded 16,000 cases of sexual violence against women and girls. Nearly 65% of cases involved children, mostly adolescent girls. An estimated 10% of victims in this period were children less than ten years old.<sup>16</sup>
- In 2009 in Colombia, more than half of the victims of sexual violence helped by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in one programme were children.<sup>17</sup>
- In the Central African Republic, nearly half of gender-based violence survivors who received support from the IRC were girls under the age of 18.<sup>18</sup>
- Almost one-fifth of girls in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince were raped during an armed rebellion in 2004 and 2005.<sup>19</sup>
- During the post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire between 1 November 2010 and 30 September 2011, children made up 51.7% of cases of sexual violence. In more than half of the cases of sexual violence against children, the survivors were below 15 years of age.<sup>20</sup>

## AISSATOU<sup>21</sup>

Aissatou (aged 15, Mali) remembers the day the rebels first entered her town and raped her friend Ines:

*“The rebels went into the village and took girls – not women, but girls. They were 15, 16, 17. They said they needed the girls to go and prepare food for them. They took them into their cars and brought them into the bush. They left them in the bush after they had finished raping them – but they beat them before leaving. I know because my friend was one of them. There were 16 girls in total. My friend's name is Ines; she is 15 now. She was 14 then, like me – we went to school together.”<sup>22</sup>*

Why is it so difficult to have accurate statistics about sexual violence in conflict? Part of the problem is the sensitive nature of the issue of sexual violence in all cultures, and the especially extreme sensitivity in some countries. Across the world, the taboo against acknowledging sexual violence is constant and prevalent. In some countries, survivors of sexual violence may be ostracised, punished or even criminalised because of what happened to them, as we have seen in Afghanistan, where children and women who report being victims of sexual violence have been accused of crimes and publicly stoned or punished,<sup>23</sup> and where a boy, aged 13, was charged with ‘moral crimes’ after being raped.<sup>24</sup>

*“We will never take our case to [officials], because they will never support us, nor will elders ever assist us in addressing issues of violence.”*

– a participant in a Save the Children focus group discussion (December 2012) with refugees who have fled Somalia

## WEAKNESSES IN REPORTING MECHANISMS AT COUNTRY LEVEL

While under-reporting of sexual violence is a significant issue for all survivors, the barriers to reporting violence against children may be even more significant. The lack of age-appropriate reporting mechanisms and child- and youth-focused services means that very few child survivors are recorded or assisted.

Many survivors lack information and awareness of where to report sexual violence cases and where to access services. Some services might not recognise children’s particular vulnerabilities and needs – which are different for boys, girls and adolescents – as well as their levels of physical, cognitive and social development, and tend to be better suited to the needs of adult women. The stigma attached to sexual violence means that girls and boys affected may be unlikely to report.

*“People have to report the things that happen. Can you imagine if no one had seen what that man was doing to my daughter? She might never have told me.”*

– Maria, recounting the rape of her five-year-old daughter Diana in Colombia by a stranger in a village they were visiting<sup>25</sup>

## WEAKNESSES IN INTERNATIONAL DATA COLLECTION

There are significant weaknesses in data collection at the international level too.<sup>26</sup> In general, the data that does exist is not disaggregated by age and excludes the experiences of younger children. Data on men and boys is particularly rare.

Existing data collection initiatives, such as the GBVIMS (Gender-Based Violence Information Management System), need greater funding and more support. More international organisations and UN agencies should support the GBVIMS and not create new or parallel data collection systems. The information gathered by the GBVIMS could be made more accessible at the international level (it is currently managed at the individual country level), and synthesised data (ie, that not at risk of compromising the security or identity of any individual survivors) could be made more available for policy and advocacy purposes.

Other existing data collection efforts could also better cover the issue of sexual violence against children. UNICEF’s Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) could expand the questions asked to incorporate data on sexual violence against children. The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) programme does ask a series of questions about sexual violence, but the youngest girls to whom these questions are put are over the age of 15.

## 2 WHO SUFFERS SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT?

Adolescent<sup>27</sup> and younger girls are recognised as the main victims of sexual violence against children. Adolescent girls constitute one of the groups most at risk on account of their physical development and age. They are particularly exposed to high levels of sexual violence such as rape, but also sexual exploitation, early or forced marriage, and unintended pregnancy. But very young girls and boys and even babies are not immune to sexual violence.

*“A man who was from another place was there and he saw the children. He took my daughter and raped her. Nobody saw him. My husband’s brother realised this was happening and took my daughter from this man. She was screaming and crying. At first, nobody in the family knew.”*

– Maria, recounting the rape of her five-year-old daughter Diana in Colombia, while visiting family in another village<sup>28</sup>

The prevalence and consequences of sexual violence against boys during armed conflict, as well as in pre- and post-conflict situations, must not be underestimated. In the DRC, for example, men and boys make up an estimated 4–10% of the survivors of sexual violence who seek treatment.<sup>29</sup> Another study in DRC found that 9% of all men (and 22% of all women) surveyed reported having directly experienced sexual violence during the conflict.<sup>30</sup>

Even though sexual violence against men and boys has been increasingly recognised by the international community during the last decade and there is a growing body of literature on the subject, the issue of sexual violence against boys in particular remains largely overlooked.

Sexism and socio-cultural attitudes in pre-conflict situations influence and determine vulnerability to sexual violence, abuse and exploitation in time of war.

# 3 WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

## CHILDREN CAUGHT UP IN ACTIVE CONFLICT

During periods of armed conflict, levels of violence facing children are greatly increased, and places where children previously felt safe become targets for attack. Children can be attacked on the roads, in the fields, inside their homes, in schools or on their way to or from school, as they walk with their families to attend religious gatherings, or when they are seeking food, water or firewood.

*“Three girls were walking to the market... They were three friends: the oldest one was 18... the middle one was 16, and the youngest was 14... The rebels grabbed the girls and took them with them... Three days later, they brought the girls back and left them in front of their homes... The girls said that there were many men there. They treated them badly, until they were exhausted. They couldn’t see how many men there were; they said it was hard to count in that state... I saw the blood on their clothes. They could barely walk... The oldest one, Djeneba, started getting sick not long after, and throwing up... That’s when they found out she was pregnant... She lost her baby at six months. Since then, she’s been sick... It was nine months ago that this happened, and she’s only starting to get better now.”*

– Aminata, aged 27, describing the rape of three girls during the conflict in Mali. They were grabbed on their way to the market.<sup>31</sup>

Sexual violence against a child, including rape, may be accompanied by beatings, threats or other acts of torture, and household possessions or goods that children might be carrying may be looted. The child or other family members may even be killed.

Collective rape of adolescents and younger girls can also happen, and rural populations are particularly vulnerable to attack. Typically, groups attack a village, killing civilians and raping women, girls and boys, before making off with the community’s cattle, tools or clothing, and sometimes setting fire to the houses.

*“The rebels were raping women... In [one area] they took two girls: one was 13 and the other was 14... Then they took a 15-year-old... There were 15 or 16 of them [men]. The one who was 13 died because they beat her so badly.”*

– Barakissa, aged 29, describing the abduction and collective rape of young girls in Mali<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, it is generally reported that in most armed conflicts, sexual violence is occurring throughout the country, even in areas where the level of conflict is lower.

*“My major responsibilities were washing clothes, cleaning, carrying firewood, spying and messenger. There was one more responsibility which I didn’t like at all and I don’t want to remember. I was raped every night by different commanders. I still remember the day when I was raped the first time. I was raped three times that night. I started feeling that all the things being said about freedom were fake. I wanted to escape from them but didn’t get chance.”*

– Amita, remembering the three years she spent (from the age of 13) with a Maoist militia in Nepal<sup>33</sup>

During armed conflict, children are also particularly vulnerable to abduction, recruitment and/or use by armed forces and groups. Both boys and girls are used by armed forces and groups for sexual purposes, a trend which is prevalent across a range of conflict-affected countries, including Colombia, the DRC, South Sudan and Afghanistan. Children often become the ‘property’ of one or more fighters and are forced to provide sexual services for them. Children may also attach themselves to individual fighters or commanders as a self-protection strategy.

Sexual violence and abuse of children does not stop when the fighting ends, including for those who have been associated with armed forces or groups. Continuing contact with or control by combatants can result in girls’ involvement in exploitative, commercial sex or forced prostitution. Girls who have borne children while with armed groups face

additional challenges when attempting to reintegrate into their families and communities, risking rejection of themselves or of their children. As a result, adolescent girls may feel they have no choice but to settle outside their communities of origin. Despite a focus on community-based interventions in reintegration programmes, such girls may miss important socio-economic support, which in turn may force them to engage in risky, exploitative activities to support themselves and their families. The socio-economic situation of many children and families in the aftermath of conflict may also force some children to engage in transactional sex or other exploitative activities in order to survive.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISPLACEMENT

Children who are forced by conflict to flee to neighbouring countries as refugees, or who become internally displaced within their own countries, are exposed to danger and insecurity. They may be repeatedly displaced and separated from their families during attacks, and are often compelled to walk for days with no protection. In these conditions they are especially vulnerable to sexual violence.

*“There is a recent case of a girl who has suffered from sexual abuse. She is now 11, and is from one of the communities in the countryside. There the people have farms, but many people from this area have been displaced, not just by illegal armed groups and guerrillas but also by the army, because the army needs places to keep watch. This has also led to cases of children being raped. Families are scared of this, so they leave their homes.”*

– A humanitarian field worker in Colombia<sup>34</sup>

Internally displaced or refugee children living in formal and informal camps or within host communities are also vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse.

In Syria, for example, it is estimated that nearly 4 million people are currently in need of assistance within the country, and an estimated 80,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) are sleeping rough in caves, parks or barns.<sup>35</sup> Some temporary shelters and basic items are provided by Syrian or international humanitarian agencies to people displaced in the country, but challenges to responding mean the level

of assistance is far below international standards. As we are seeing through Save the Children’s response to the crisis, this particularly affects girls: the conditions that families are living in are cramped, allowing girls in particular little privacy. Girls are often afraid to leave their shelter at night: the alarming presence of armed men means that fear of sexual violence is pervasive.<sup>36</sup>

According to the Child Protection Working Group, there are reports that girls as young as 12, and also boys, have been sexually abused and that sexual abuse is taking place in detention.<sup>37</sup> The prevalence of such abuses is hard to establish, as survivors often do not report the attacks for fear of dishonouring their family or bringing about reprisals. But fear of sexual violence is repeatedly cited to Save the Children as one of the principal reasons why families flee their homes, and there are increasing reports of early marriage as parents take desperate measures to ‘protect’ their daughters from sexual violence.<sup>38</sup>

Safety and security measures to prevent situations in which girls and boys may be more susceptible to abuse are often not taken into account sufficiently when humanitarian agencies establish a shelter or camp. For example, children (especially girls) in displacement camps set up in government-run schools in Lebanon for Palestinian refugees in 2007 reported being sexually harassed while visiting toilets located out in the playgrounds. Save the Children raised the problem, and the toilets were moved inside the buildings. Save the Children also raised awareness of the problem among parents and carers of children so they could make sure that children were not left to go to the toilets alone at night.

In camps in Ethiopia, more than 69% of the Somali refugee population is composed of children under the age of 18 (33% girls and 36% boys).<sup>39</sup> In focus group discussions, most women and girls reported having heard of or experienced sexual violence in the camps, including girls of 13 or younger.<sup>40</sup> Women and girls reported feeling most at risk of rape when collecting firewood; to do this they had to move outside the immediate vicinity of the camp, which left them alone and particularly vulnerable. In one set of focus group discussions almost all the women and girls interviewed reported having witnessed or survived rape (including gang rape) while collecting firewood. Given the frequency of the attacks, some women have

stopped collecting firewood, with severe implications for their ability to cook and ensure adequate levels of nutrition for their family.

*“I always go to the hills praying that I return safe for my children, and that God will rule out rape or physical violence this time.”*

– a female participant in a Save the Children focus group (December 2012) discussion with refugees who have fled Somalia, on her fears about collecting firewood

*“Sexual violence/rape is prevalent in our camp, especially as women and girls go to collect firewood, and we are always risking our lives as our children would starve if we didn’t put our lives at stake.”*

– a pregnant participant in a focus group (December 2012) discussion with refugees who have fled Somalia

In the Dadaab refugee camps on the Somalia-Kenya border, young girls and adolescents in particular are frequently attacked while searching for firewood, going to the toilet or walking to collect water, all of which activities mean walking to the outskirts of the camp or farther, which exposes them to increased risk. Across the Dadaab camps there are also frequent cases of sexual violence against young boys.

Displaced or refugee children are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and physical harm when they become separated from their parents. This can be a result of the death of one or both parents, or the children may be sent to live elsewhere in the belief that they will be safer or have better education and other facilities. In Myanmar, for example, children are sent to camps by parents in the hope that they will be able to access better education.<sup>41</sup>

Girls living in foster care or extended families can be especially vulnerable to sexual abuse once they enter puberty and start to develop. In addition to sexual violence, girls living without their parents were more susceptible to being taken out of school, overworked and pushed into a forced or early marriage.

*“At that time, I was five years old. My mother was working, and my father too, and my older sister was studying. So I was with my uncle. He gave dinner to my two little sisters but he didn’t give me dinner. We went to bed – me with my sisters – but I couldn’t sleep so he took me to his room. In that moment, everything happened. He raped me.”*

– Sandra, now aged 15, describing how she was raped by her uncle after she was sent to live with extended family in Colombia<sup>42</sup>

Early or forced marriages are also prevalent in refugee and IDP camps. As the examples below show, in some cases girls are forced to marry their rapist, either by their parents to avoid the shame such violence brings to the family and the girl, or under pressure from the attacker himself. In other cases, families pressurise girls to marry in the belief that she will have access to services or in return for services or supplies for the family.

In the Dollo Ado camps in Ethiopia, Somali refugee girls as young as 11 are often ‘married’ to prevent ‘dishonour’ for both the girl and her family in the event that they are raped or sexually abused. Moreover, young girls who have been raped or sexually assaulted might also then be married to minimise ‘dishonour’ for the family.

*“It is very important for a girl to get married soon, as she will be safe from any risks and abuses in the community. Furthermore, only few girls can control themselves and many would engage in unnecessary sexual behaviours that are against the culture and the religion of the society. We don’t want to hear things like ‘Your daughter was seen with a boy’, or ‘Your daughter did this or that.’ As a family we want to be dignified, and this can be achieved through getting girls married at an early age, otherwise many will end up in prostitution and bring shame to their families and clans.”*

– a 64-year-old male participant in a Save the Children focus group (December 2012) discussion with refugees who have fled Somalia

Similarly, in the Dadaab camps in Kenya, early marriage of girls as young as 13 is also widespread. One adolescent girl reported to Save the Children that men with money would often offer fathers their ‘daily bread’ in return for marrying their daughters. Girl survivors of rape at the camp also reported to Save the Children that they felt powerless to refuse to marry their attacker for lack of other options and the fear of being rejected by their families, pushed out of the camps, sent back to Somalia or even killed.

Early marriage of adolescent refugee girls from Syria in Lebanon, some as young as 14, is used as a ‘protection’ and coping mechanism. While early marriage was common among the Syrian population when they were still at home in Syria, with displacement to Lebanon there is evidence that an increased number of girls are being married to community members to ‘protect’ them from rape,



while some are being married to rich men from the refugee or host community to offset living and accommodation costs.<sup>43</sup>

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN DETENTION

The problem of sexual violence against children in detention is a major concern within the juvenile justice arena in general. It springs from a disregard of legislation and normative guidance to protect children within justice systems (that suggests, for example, not placing children in the same detention facility as adults). Within conflict, particularly where justice systems are weak and normal rules of detention are often misapplied or not enforced, the risk of such standards being disregarded is even greater. Certain children are also at significant risk because of their ethnicity, nationality or perceived association with a political or armed group, or because they have experienced or witnessed sexual violence. This can include being tortured in a sexual manner.

Children are particularly at risk of sexual violence when they are detained and targeted for information, because of the unequal power dynamics between adults and children. Evidence from the Middle East highlights the particular vulnerability of boys to such violence in that region. Recent reports on Israel and the OPT by the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict documented six cases of Palestinian boys being sexually assaulted by Israeli security forces and 20 cases in which boys were threatened with sexual assault.<sup>44</sup>

In Syria, sexual violence in detention has reportedly been used in order to torture boys, and includes rape and other penetration, sexual groping, forced nudity and beatings to genitalia.<sup>45</sup>

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN PRE- AND POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS

It is important to recognise that sexual violence is not a problem exclusive to times of conflict – sexual violence, as well as other forms of violence, is prevalent and problematic in peacetime in all countries. It disproportionately affects women and girls, although boys are subject to it as well.

In conflict or post-conflict situations, worsening poverty and the undermining of traditional social norms may force children into new forms of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, such as transactional or commercial sex. Girls, in particular, may be encouraged or forced by their families to engage in transactional sex with community members such as teachers or store owners in exchange for materials and other items.<sup>46</sup>

One report in the eastern DRC estimated that up to 80% of unaccompanied children were engaging in transactional sex.<sup>47</sup> A further report detailed the causes and ‘controllers’ of such exploitation.<sup>48</sup> Poverty, the lack of means to access education and the impact of conflict were reported by both boy and girl respondents as the main drivers for their engagement in transactional sex. The general age of children was between 12 and 14 years (though some children as young as eight were also noted). And in Colombia, it is estimated that 20,000 to 35,000 children have been forced into commercial sex work as a direct consequence of the culture of violence and poverty resulting from the armed conflict.<sup>49</sup>

Some families living in conflict areas may view ‘selling’ their children into trafficking as a way of securing their safety from the conflict. Save the Children staff working in conflict-affected areas report cases of girls being trafficked in northern Myanmar to be brides in China. This exploitation was primarily controlled by civilians, but civilians and military personnel were reported to be clients.

Looking at the long-term consequences of sexual exploitation and trafficking coming out of conflict settings it is commonly believed that the frequent sexual exploitation of girls and trafficking for sexual purposes witnessed during the Balkans War has led to the continuing and worryingly high level of trafficking of young girls for sexual purposes from and within South-East Europe seen today.<sup>50</sup>

# 4 WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

Armed actors, whether from government armed forces or from non-state armed groups, are likely to be the primary group of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. However, it should not be forgotten that a significant proportion will be civilians.

Such is the nature of conflict (particularly chronic, long-term or cyclical conflict and instability) that a breakdown of socio-cultural norms combined with strained economic conditions and likely impunity for perpetrators can result in an increase in the number of civilians committing sexual violence against children, within the home and community. Indeed, reports from IDP camps in northern Uganda showed that sexual violence committed by civilians (other camp residents) was much higher than that committed by armed actors.<sup>51</sup>

*“The man who raped me was the husband of my brother’s sister... He was a man who was related to the paramilitary group or guerrillas – I’m not sure which... After he raped me, I felt awful, I felt sad, I cried and cried. I was pregnant. I really wanted to die. I couldn’t eat anything. He was near to my house and I was very scared. I didn’t go out, because I was scared it would happen to me again. He went away and I felt better, but then when he came back I felt the same horrible feelings again. I was 18 when he raped me. This happens a lot. There is a lot of violence and people don’t report it.”*

– Angie, aged 23, recounting the experience of being raped in Colombia when she was 18<sup>52</sup>

However, in many cases the stationing of troops, including those serving in peacekeeping missions, has also led to increases in the levels of sexual exploitation of children. A joint study conducted by Save the Children and UNHCR in Sierra Leone in 2002 highlighted, for the first time, shockingly high levels of sexual exploitation and abuse of civilians by peacekeepers and other humanitarian staff (including volunteers and incentive workers<sup>53</sup>). It found relief items being provided in exchange for sexual favours and/or inappropriate relationships as a result of the unequal power relations between displaced communities and those who are mandated to protect and assist them.<sup>54</sup>

It should also be noted that while men are likely to represent the majority of perpetrators of sexual violence and exploitation against children, women are also responsible, particularly in relation to the control or exploitation of children engaged in transactional sex as a result of their economic and family situations.<sup>55</sup>

# 5 WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

There are many different and sometimes overlapping reasons why armed and non-armed individuals commit sexual violence against children during conflict. This section explores the primary factors.

## GENDER AND POWER INEQUALITIES

Sexual violence perpetuates power inequalities in interpersonal relations and in society, reproducing the structures that enable this type of violence to exist before, during and after conflict. Such power inequalities include those based on gender (male/female and male/male) as well as those based on age (adult/child). An overwhelming factor at the heart of gender-based violence is the pervasive inequality between males and females and the discrimination that women and girls face within societies as a whole. There is a direct link between discrimination against women and girls in peacetime and the intensified violence inflicted on women and girls in times of war.

*“[Justified reasons for beating one’s wife include] a woman talking to another man in the market or elsewhere, losing the food ration, not taking good care of the house-cleaning and washing, delaying in doing chores, neglecting children, burning food or preparing food which is not tasty, arguing with the husband over inappropriate use of food rations.”*

– a 28-year-old female participant in a focus group (December 2012) discussion with refugees who have fled Somalia

In many conflict-affected countries, the fact that females are considered second-class citizens is closely related to the violence inflicted on women and girls, and to the discriminatory absence of appropriate measures on the part of the state to combat such violence.

*“There is a problem of physical abuse here of women by men. Many of the men are chauvinistic. Some women get used to this abuse, but it’s difficult and they never report it.”*

– Maria, aged 33, describing violence against women in her area of Colombia<sup>56</sup>

In many pre-conflict settings, women and girls often suffer economic, social, cultural and political discrimination, and many do not know of the rights and protections that may exist under national or international law. Social customs and customary laws are also often highly discriminatory against women and girls, and often take precedence over national laws in relation to acts of violence against women in the community. In Afghanistan, for example, despite a national law enacted in 2009 criminalising rape and all forms of sexual and other violence against women, women who have been raped are often subjected to lengthy prison sentences pursuant to the Afghan Penal Code,<sup>57</sup> and punishments of flogging and stoning for adultery have been reported.<sup>58</sup>

A key tool for perpetrators is their ability to make their victims believe they (the victims) are to blame for their abuse. In distortions of power between adults and children that are influenced by gender (ie, between adult and adolescent males and girls), attitudes that girls are to blame for rape or that they want to be raped are common, and in turn can fuel further abuse.

Gender inequality and power relations are also relevant in the context of defining cultural values and practices, and within the wider framework of social relations between families and communities (for example, racial, ethnic, caste and social class inequalities).<sup>59</sup> In some countries, superstition and fetishism are a further motivation of some fighters, many of whom reportedly believe that having sexual relations with a pre-pubescent child will make them immune to disease, including HIV, or will cure them if they already have contracted HIV, or protect them from injury or death during combat.<sup>60</sup>

## CHANGING AND WEAKENING OF SOCIAL NORMS

*“The most difficult thing to change is the culture – this sexual violence has become a way of life... The thing that makes me sad is how the culture has got to this. I don’t understand how this has become part of the culture.”*

– A humanitarian field worker in Colombia<sup>61</sup>

Armed conflict destroys many normal forms of protection, and in particular governmental and community mechanisms, such as pre-existing law enforcement, statutory social or child welfare systems, schools and religious structures. Families are also often separated. Children are therefore made more vulnerable to sexual violence during conflict when the family and community support systems that are so essential to a child’s survival and development are fractured or collapse.

During conflict, traditional institutions such as families, schools or religious institutions, which play a role in the development of children through the provision of protection and guidance (including on their social development and sex education), are often unable to provide support to children, leaving them at greater risk of violence and abuse. In many families, particularly in rural communities, parents and other primary carers of children do not know how to effectively protect their children during conflict (for example, considering it appropriate for children to engage in hazardous and exploitative activities, or not knowing how to protect their children from threats within communities).<sup>62</sup>

The protective role of parents and other carers of children is often undermined and damaged by the effects of conflict and worsening socio-economic conditions, exacerbating situations where family and community members are or can become perpetrators of violence themselves. Poverty also has a negative impact on the support children receive from their families, as it encourages the use of children to generate income. In certain contexts, families can even encourage or take advantage of a child experiencing sexual violence or abuse: “Today some cases of sexual violence are authorised by parents... they are no longer capable of taking charge of their children and that is why when it comes to the application of the law, many parents prefer an informal settlement (*arrangement à l’amiable*)... because a cow is really a source of wealth.”<sup>63</sup>

Where children are not able to turn to such institutions for guidance in social and sexual development, they are likely to turn towards other, more counterproductive groups, and even perpetrate violence themselves. In this way, sexual violence can be cyclical if not adequately addressed: “Cycles of violence emerge as children who have been deeply traumatised by violence join armed groups, street gangs or live on the street because their family networks cannot support them”.<sup>64</sup>

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BREAKDOWN

In non-conflict or pre-conflict settings, the socio-economic situation of families has been seen to be a key driver of children’s vulnerability to sexual violence and exploitation.<sup>65</sup> The destabilising effect of conflict on families’ and communities’ economic stability can contribute to children’s vulnerability.

Loss of livelihoods and a perceived loss of ‘manhood’ are also cited as creating psychosocial pressure on men that can increase the prevalence of violence. Participants in focus group discussions with refugee populations who have fled Somalia, for example, described psychosocial pressure on men leading to the increased use of cigarettes and abuse of ‘chat/khat’ (a flowering plant with an amphetamine-like stimulant), which may result in increased sexual violence in homes and in the camps.<sup>66</sup>

A lack of economic opportunities or access to markets and income sources as well as increases in female, single-parent and child-headed households can lead women and girls to engage in transactional sex in order to gain essential items or contribute to household income. In countries with long histories of conflict and instability, there is evidence that the economic impact of conflict, including reduced wages and high unemployment, can be seen in parts of the country that are not directly affected by conflict, as well as in those areas that are.

In Kinshasa, local organisations have reported families sending girls as young as eight to engage in transactional sex.<sup>67</sup> In a study of children living and working on the street in Kinshasa, 63.3% of girls interviewed stated that transactional sex or ‘survival’ sex was their main source of income.<sup>68</sup> Engagement in risky sexual survival strategies such as transactional

sex can lead to greater vulnerability to other sexual violence and abuse. Reduced economic conditions within families may also contribute to an increase in early or forced marriage, as levels of poverty may make dowries appear more useful than having a girl within the home.

## RAPE AS A WEAPON OF WAR

Combatants use rape as a deliberate strategy of warfare, perpetrated in many cases with the encouragement or at the behest of commanding officers. The rape of children in particular can be used to deliberately and strategically destabilise opposing forces by terrorising and humiliating the men, women and children of the community from which they believe their adversaries originate. Fighters also commit rape to secure control, through fear and intimidation, over the population of the territory they want to occupy, with the ultimate aim of gaining access to, or maintaining control over, territories that are rich in natural resources.

As with rape against women, rape against children can be used as a form of reprisal against individuals, families and communities. The rapists also seek to attack the fundamental values and social fabric of the community, principally through maximising the humiliation and debasement of children and witnesses. In the DRC, for example, cases feature the rape of mothers and daughters in front of their family, mass rapes, rapes in public and forcing victims to have sex with family members as ways to attack the fundamental values of the community.<sup>69</sup> In Sri Lanka a grandmother described how the army raped both her and her daughter in front of her grandchildren: “The army made us strip completely in front of the children. All the women were made to walk around the soldiers in a circle. The soldiers were laughing at us. All the women were then raped in front of everyone. My daughter and I were raped in front of her children. I was raped in front of my grandchildren.”<sup>70</sup>

In many cultures keeping women ‘chaste’ is seen to be important to the honour of families and communities. Girls and women that are sexually assaulted or raped may be perceived to bring dishonour to the family and can be ostracised. In some cases girls and women can even be killed by their own families if their behaviour

is seen to threaten their honour. In war this dynamic is used to further dishonour and humiliate families and communities.

*“The girl they took was 16... They had uniforms – they were all dressed the same. They covered their eyes so she didn’t know who they were. They had guns. There were five of them, and they all forced her to sleep with them. They didn’t hit her, but they ruined her.”*

– Maimouna, 24, describing the abduction and gang rape of her 16-year-old neighbour in Mali<sup>71</sup>

Sexual violence can have a clear ethnic dimension in some cases, with fighters deliberately singling out their victims from among an ‘opposing’ ethnic group. Inter-ethnic violence can extend to sexual violence, and numerous women are targeted for rape solely because of their ethnicity. The goal is to undermine community bonds, weaken resistance and perpetuate ethnic cleansing by targeting individuals in a particular ethnic group and using rape as a way to destroy unwanted groups of a different ethnicity or religion, including through deliberate infection with HIV or forced impregnation of women.

## UNDISCIPLINED SECURITY FORCES

The very institutions that are supposed to keep children safe from violence can sometimes perpetuate the problem. In many instances, attacks on the population, including children, are linked to corruption of the police force, or poor capacity of the national army. The army not only fails to fulfil its duty to provide security for the civilian population, but perpetrates violations against children themselves. The increased presence of national armies, police forces and international peacekeeping forces in conflict can perpetuate the problem of sexual violence.

As we know from a number of high-profile examples, international peacekeeping forces have themselves committed acts of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) during conflicts in, for example, Cambodia, the DRC, East Timor, Eritrea, Haiti and Liberia. Despite measures taken within the UN system to address SEA, such as the Secretary-General’s Bulletin, and the introduction of training and disciplinary procedures, such misconduct within UN missions continues to be challenging.

## WIDESPREAD CLIMATE OF IMPUNITY

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are prohibited by most national laws as well as by international human rights law<sup>73</sup> and international humanitarian law. When committed on a large scale or systematically during conflict, such conduct also amounts to a crime against humanity in addition to constituting a war crime. And yet rape and other sexual violence are seldom prosecuted, and perpetrators rarely face any legal or disciplinary consequences for their crimes. As a result, a culture of impunity is entrenched, encouraging further rapes and sexual violence, as perpetrators know that they will not be held accountable.

*“It’s very difficult. This man is dangerous to others and linked to armed groups because of his brother. He knows that all the neighbours know what has happened. The mother herself returned from the hospital and told all the neighbours that the girl [aged two and a half] had also been raped. But the man knows he can be fine. He says hi to all the neighbours and stays there calmly because he knows that nothing has ever happened to him. He knows the police won’t do anything. So much violence happens here and the police are here every day – morning and afternoon – but they never do anything.”*

– Susana, aged 36, recounting the rape of one of her neighbours’ children, aged just two and a half, in Colombia<sup>74</sup>

International humanitarian law specifically requires parties to a conflict to protect women and children from rape and any other form of assault. The prohibition of rape and sexual violence during conflict is actually widely considered to be a principle of customary international humanitarian law. States have an obligation to ensure that their national laws are compliant with the prohibition and must take steps to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of violations.

While states have primary responsibility for prosecuting these crimes, international criminal law allows alleged perpetrators to be tried in an international court, such as the International Criminal Court, or at specific ad hoc tribunals (as for Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone), or in a domestic court of a third state invoking universal jurisdiction. In practice, however, the number of prosecutions in such courts is exceedingly low.

Even where national laws are in line with international law, customary practice still prevailing in many parts of some states penalises survivors – for example, through charges of adultery or homosexuality, when they try to report a sexual attack.

Evidentiary and procedural barriers to prosecutions for rape and sexual violence can also contribute to the culture of impunity. An extreme example is Sudan, where many judges require that four male

## ABUSES COMMITTED BY PEACEKEEPERS AND HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

In 2002, a ground-breaking report by Save the Children and UNHCR highlighted the extent of exploitation and abuse of women and girls by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where common items of humanitarian aid (ie, food and non-food rations) and other items or ‘promises’ were exchanged for sexual favours. In response to this the UN and NGOs started to put in place codes of conduct; training of personnel; and reporting, investigation and disciplinary procedures. This has culminated in the UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin on prevention

of sexual exploitation and abuse by all UN staff, the establishment of the Inter-agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises (as part of the humanitarian reform process), individual and inter-agency codes of conduct, investigation procedures and trainings. Despite these measures and some improvement in reducing the scale of the problem, the level of exploitation is still worryingly high, as highlighted in the 2008 report *No One To Turn To*.<sup>72</sup>

witnesses testify that the rape took place before a conviction can be secured.<sup>75</sup> Any rigid approach to the prosecution of sexual offences, such as requiring proof of force or physical resistance, also risks leaving certain types of rape unpunished.

Other barriers preventing national courts from functioning properly or at all include insufficient or poorly trained law enforcement and judicial personnel, insufficient financial resources, and poor national legal frameworks establishing criminal liability. Judicial personnel are often poorly and irregularly paid and have no incentive to carry out their duties. Many rape survivors and their families who wish to see their attackers brought before the courts do not trust the police and the judicial system enough to lodge a legal complaint. Victims face other obstacles to pursuing their right to an effective remedy, including financial ones.

The lack of protection for child victims and witnesses is another factor impeding justice for survivors of

sexual violence. In the context of armed conflict, child survivors are often insufficiently protected by the authorities, police or peacekeeping forces against fighters or civilians who intend to intimidate them or perpetrate further violence against them. Fear of reprisals also prevents child survivors or their families from reporting these crimes.

Reporting crimes of sexual violence in these circumstances is also likely to intensify the trauma experienced by child survivors. Although courts may be required by law to offer psychological support to victims of sexual violence, this happens rarely if at all in the context of armed conflict. It is essential that the police and other law enforcement officers, as well as lawyers and the judiciary involved in each case, put the child's best interests at the forefront of any decision to proceed with a case, during the proceedings and when deciding what reparations should be awarded.

# 6 WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN?

Survivors of sexual violence continue to suffer and have their rights violated in the aftermath of rape through a lack of access to healthcare or social reintegration, which deepens their suffering immeasurably.

For survivors of sexual violence, recovery from their trauma, both physical and psychological, is a priority. Most survivors suffer physical injuries or illness caused by rape but have no medical care because of insufficient front-line service provision in emergencies and the destruction of health infrastructures. Access to anti-retroviral medicines within three days can help prevent rape survivors becoming infected with HIV, but is rare.

*“It was horrible. My daughter got sick because she had been injured by what the man had done when he molested her. She was bleeding, she had a fever and she stayed in the hospital for eight days.”*

– Maria, recounting the medical effects after the rape of her five-year-old daughter Diana in Colombia by a stranger in a village they were visiting<sup>76</sup>

The physical, psychological and social impact on both girls and boys of experiencing sexual violence is significant, in both the short and the long term. The impact of the violence on children’s bodies may be very severe given their smaller size and physical immaturity and the risk of infertility. Injury and illness due to violence is considerable, as is the psychological impact, which is often worsened by family and community rejection. Girls in particular, and those who become pregnant as a result of rape, will often be forced to drop out of school, be prevented from accessing vocational training and face social exclusion and stigmatisation. Their chances of further education, livelihoods and marriage are severely diminished or completely eliminated. This condemns them, especially girls, to a lifetime of extreme poverty and increased vulnerability to risky or exploitative economic practices as children and then as adults, with poverty spreading across generations.

## PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

The brutality of sexual violence frequently causes serious physical injuries requiring long-term and complex treatment. The consequences can be particularly severe for children, in particular girls, since their bodies are smaller and less developed.

Girls may suffer uterine prolapses (the descent of the uterus into the vagina or beyond), vesico-vaginal or recto-vaginal fistulas and other injuries to the reproductive system or rectum, often accompanied by internal and external bleeding and discharge. Fistulas often result in urinary or faecal incontinence, a condition that is difficult to hide from public knowledge, which adds to the survivor’s distress and embarrassment, and may make them reluctant to seek healthcare even when it is available. Other injuries, such as a broken pelvis, can occur if extreme force is used against girls during rape. Other effects of sexual violence on girls can include gastrointestinal problems, eating disorders (especially bulimia nervosa) and gynaecological symptoms – for example, dysmenorrhea (severe pain or cramps in the lower abdomen during menstruation) and menorrhagia (abnormally heavy or prolonged bleeding during menstruation).<sup>77</sup>

*“There have been so many cases of rape here in the camps. Two months ago, I saw a 14-year-old girl raped in front of my own eyes. She was so badly damaged that she could not even hold her urine in.”*

– a participant in a Save the Children focus group (December 2012) discussion with refugees who have fled Somalia

Boy survivors of rape can also suffer severe physical injury, including damage to the anus, pain during urination, blood in the stools and severe anal, rectal, penile and testicular pain.<sup>78</sup> Physical symptoms commonly suffered by both girls and boys include headaches, nausea, stomach pains, rashes, sleeplessness, fatigue, and sexual dysfunction for adolescents.<sup>79</sup>



Long-term sexual health problems are also prevalent in many cases, including infertility and difficulties in maintaining normal sexual relationships.<sup>80</sup> Many such injuries generally require long-term treatment, but in situations of armed conflict children often lack access to proper treatment because of the lack of functioning health centres and hospitals equipped with the appropriate drugs, materials and trained personnel.

In addition to the physical injuries and infections suffered by most child survivors of sexual abuse, young girls who become pregnant after having been raped are at greater risk of maternal mortality or morbidity because their bodies are not sufficiently developed to bear children. Even in peacetime, pregnancy is the leading cause of death among girls aged 15–19, due to complications of delivery and unsafe abortion. Adolescents aged 15–19 are twice as likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth, and girls under 15 are five times more likely to die, compared with women aged 20 and older.<sup>81</sup>

*“A month later I realised that I had not had a period. My mother had explained to me that if you miss a period that means you are pregnant. So I knew then that I had got pregnant from the rape. I was so sad and angry. I then went to tell my mum that I had not had a period – she said nothing but just looked at me and slowly shook her head.”*

– Myriam, aged 15, who was raped in the DRC<sup>82</sup>

The risks are higher in conflict situations, where maternal health services are likely to be unavailable or inadequate as a result of the conflict. Infant and maternal mortality rates in countries ravaged by sexual violence in conflicts are among the highest in the world, and there is evidence to show that conflict and high infant mortality rates are linked.<sup>83</sup>

Abortion is illegal in many countries where armed conflict is taking place, and while some countries have an exception for pregnancies resulting from rape, this is not always the case, and women and girls face severe penalties for attempted or actual abortion (in the DRC the penalty is a minimum sentence of five years’ imprisonment). Consequently, many survivors resort to unsafe and unprofessional methods, including sometimes self-induced abortion, which is dangerous for the mother and can lead to severe haemorrhage and sometimes death.

In countries most affected by rape, the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is also a factor. These STIs include syphilis, gonorrhoea and HIV.

Destruction of genital tissue caused by the violence associated with rape or gang rape on children greatly increases the chances of infected rapists transmitting STIs to the child survivor.<sup>84</sup> Fear of having acquired STIs, HIV and unwanted pregnancy also intensifies the trauma.

The psychological consequences for child survivors of sexual violence can be multiple and long-lasting, including emotional effects (such as post-traumatic stress disorder, somatic and conversion disorders), intense feelings of terror, shock, rage and shame, depression, loss of self-esteem, loss of confidence, self-blame, memory loss, nightmares and day-time ‘flashbacks’ to the rape. Many of these symptoms overlap, and if left untreated, the psychological impact of sexual violence and abuse can strongly influence children’s ability to form meaningful relationships as adults with others, including their own children.<sup>85</sup> However, therapeutic support and treatment are rare in countries affected by conflicts, and very few survivors have access to the services they need.

*“After it happened Diana was scared and couldn’t sleep. She became scared of her father. This last year has been awful and really difficult for Diana in school. She has needed a lot of support and I think she still needs more psychological support.”*

– Maria, recounting the psychological effects after the rape of her five-year-old daughter Diana in Colombia by a stranger in a village they were visiting<sup>86</sup>

The psychological and social impacts of sexual violence can affect children who are not attacked themselves but who witness attacks on family, friends or other members of their community. This means that over and above the hundreds of thousands of

## NAFISA’S STORY

Nine-year-old Nafisa fled from one region of Somalia to another in May 2012 with her stepmother and siblings after witnessing the beating and sexual assault of her mother by militias. She arrived on foot.

*“I came here with my stepmother. It was 12 days ago, I think. I saw my mother being tortured by militias. They beat her and used the butt of a gun to torture her... What makes me most sad is when I recall the beating of my mother. It terrifies me. It gives me very bad dreams and makes me scared. I want to be with her.”<sup>87</sup>*

children who are themselves survivors of sexual violence, there are many times more who need support and care because of what they have seen happen to others.

## STIGMATISATION, REJECTION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Children who have been raped often encounter widespread discrimination and rejection by their families and communities, including insults and threats and/or exclusion from school. Social and family rejection also carries enormous economic consequences for the victims, who are not only marginalised and cut off from schooling and livelihoods, in particular for adolescents.

Children who are born from rape can also face severe discrimination and are often referred to as “the child of the enemy”.<sup>88</sup> Fear of rejection and social isolation prevents many survivors from seeking help or speaking out. The widespread fear of HIV can also contribute to the stigmatisation of rape survivors and their children.

Girls in particular face severe consequences as a result of stigma and social exclusion. Rape during conflict can leave them marginalised and isolated from their families and communities, and often excluded

from school, which has a drastic lifelong impact on their future prospects. Sexual assault or rape also has a severe impact on a girl’s prospects for marriage. In cultures where girls are mainly valued as wives, their ‘chastity’ is a prime asset and hence, when it is lost, their ability to find a husband is limited, and little other means of support may be available to them. As a consequence, rape and other forms of sexual abuse can have a lifelong effect on the livelihoods of girls. This is especially so for girls who become pregnant as a result of rape: their chances are even further reduced given the challenges of continuing education while caring for small children.

### FÉLICITÉ’S STORY

Félicité (aged 13, Democratic Republic of Congo) was raped by the chief of a local armed group while supporting her family’s income by helping to sell beer after fleeing her village in 2012.

*“I don’t go to school nowadays – I don’t feel up to it. I don’t like to hang around with other girls in my area either, because they gossip and talk a lot. Today I feel like I’m ill – I don’t feel right. I feel like I am suffering from something and I don’t know what it is. I think about what happened a lot.”<sup>89</sup>*



## FATIM, 16

Fatim and her family had to flee their village when armed men attacked them. They are now living in an informal camp in Mali.

*“I came here because of the rebels. They were raping girls – some were 16, 14, 13.*

*“They came to get me, too. They came to our house with their guns. I was terrified. They hit my father and told him to give me over. That’s when I fled.”*

Fatim managed to hide in a neighbour’s house.

*“I’m still in touch with my friends back home. They tell me there are many girls missing now. I don’t know exactly how many, but it’s a lot. There’s another girl, my friend, too – the same thing happened to her. They went inside her house and took her. Whenever they decide they want a girl, that they like her, they just take her. Nobody can stop them. She was 15 years old.”*

## PART 2

# PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Is sexual violence an inevitable part of conflict? Are we powerless to protect the huge numbers of girls and boys from sexual violence in wartime? No. Save the Children's experience shows that sexual violence is not an inevitable part of conflict and that barriers can be built between children and violence. When sufficient funding and priority is attached to the Protection sector, programmes across what we call the Deliver–Empower–Change–Reform spectrum can prevent and respond to sexual violence in ways that address the particular needs and vulnerabilities of children.

# I THE DELIVER–EMPOWER– CHANGE–REFORM MODEL

## **We can deliver comprehensive, child-focused services by:**

- ensuring children have safe access to shelter, education, and water/sanitation/cooking fuel
- creating child- and adolescent-friendly spaces
- strengthening community-based early warning and mitigation schemes
- supporting community-based child protection systems, including child protection committees
- developing referral pathways and providing support for service providers to ensure they meet the needs of children.

## **We can empower children and their communities by:**

- supporting child-led groups and increasing children’s voice and participation
- supporting parents and carers
- ensuring children and communities have a safe way to earn a living even in times of crisis.

## **We can change attitudes and behaviours by:**

- raising awareness of sexual violence among children and their communities
- tackling discrimination against women and girls
- working with men and boys
- increasing the representation of women in post-conflict planning and peace-building.

## **We can reform laws and institutions and build political will:**

- at the national level by:
  - ensuring that national armies and police forces are trained and screened, and that former combatants are properly reintegrated
  - strengthening national legal and policy frameworks – and ensuring their enforcement – to address sexual violence
  - strengthening national health systems
  - strengthening national education systems
  - strengthening national child protection systems

- at the international level by:
  - strengthening protection mandates of peacekeeping operations
  - supporting international coordination, including through the UN.

## I DELIVER COMPREHENSIVE CHILD-FOCUSED SERVICES

### ENSURING CHILDREN HAVE SAFE ACCESS TO SHELTER, EDUCATION, AND WATER/SANITATION/COOKING FUEL

In the Dollo Ado camps in Ethiopia, for example, refugee Somali girls at times refrained from using the toilets because of the levels of uncleanliness, and because the doors did not always lock safely. They feared rape and the risk of sexual violence. The inability to use sanitation facilities led refugee community members to defecate on the perimeter of the camps, which some believed increased tension between the refugee and host communities and was even seen as a cause of violence against the refugee girls and women.

But humanitarian organisations can implement protective measures to diminish the risks of sexual violence occurring in areas where they are operating, including by improving the design of camps. Measures that have been found to improve protection include ensuring safe access to water/sanitation (for example, through gender-segregated and lockable latrines and separate toilets), organising patrols to ensure safe access to cooking fuel and other goods and services, and ensuring appropriate lighting in public spaces.

Ensuring safe access to education can also help to reduce sexual violence: the concept of schools as ‘zones of peace’ is an instrumental part of any strategy to reduce sexual violence in conflict. Safe school policies can support similar actions to prevent children being targeted for sexual exploitation and trafficking. Codes of conduct for education staff,

reporting mechanisms and disciplinary procedures must be developed and implemented – together with life skills and child-led behaviour change activities – as a way to address the high levels of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation that are known to exist in schools, particularly in conflict-affected countries.

### CREATING CHILD- AND ADOLESCENT-FRIENDLY SPACES

*“The parents love the project. They’re worried that the kids spend their free time doing bad things. They know that the children are safe when they come to the Save the Children spaces and they know that we’re helping the children to grow. They ask us to come and work in their neighbourhoods; they love the project a lot. The children love it too. They feel free here. These are places where they can participate, share, speak up and learn to live together.”*

– A humanitarian field worker in Colombia<sup>90</sup>

*“How does it affect children? There are so many dangers in the street. This is why it’s great that Save the Children is opening safe houses for children, especially in the most dangerous neighbourhoods. Children then have safe spaces. Parents are confident to send their children to the safe spaces, because if the kids are in the streets they’re exposed to violence and bad things that happen, whereas if they’re at the Save the Children space they are safe, learning and very happy.”*

– Viviana, aged 15, describing a child protection project in Colombia<sup>91</sup>

Child-friendly spaces and adolescent-friendly spaces are ‘drop-in’ centres to provide children and adolescents affected by crisis with a comforting environment that helps them cope with the uncertainty around them, lets them learn and play, gives them space to act as children and protects them. Children can access recreational opportunities, psycho-social support, and life-training skills such as child protection, mine-risk education and hygiene awareness. Adolescents additionally receive informal education and vocational training and are trained in peer education and peer mediation on topics such as gender norms, cultivating resilience and peace-building skills. It also gives parents the opportunity to rebuild their lives while their children are with trusted caregivers from their community.

### STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED EARLY WARNING AND MITIGATION SCHEMES

Community-based early warning and mitigation schemes involve early warning communication between members of communities (for example, members of key community structures such as schools, places of worship, markets and health clinics), and raising awareness of potential threats of sexual violence, particularly by armed groups.

Such schemes include text-message trees which can allow parents, teachers and other key community members to adopt additional strategies to help

## CASE STUDY: CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES IN COLOMBIA<sup>92</sup>

We are running four child-friendly spaces. The concept of the spaces is that they look the same and are built the same as the children’s houses. We make sure that the minimum basic services are available for children – a toilet with a septic tank, water, electricity – and that they are safe for children. For example, we build better, safer, elevated wooden walkways for the children to get to the spaces. In these communities, all the houses are raised off the ground and connected by wooden walkways, as the water from the sea comes in to here.

In the spaces, we hold sessions by age group. There are three different groups: 3–8-year-olds, 9–13-year-olds and 14–18-year-olds. The children and young people in each of these groups normally have school

in the morning or the afternoon, so they come to the space for the other half of the day to fill their free time. We also work with parents.

We have some distinctive strategies that are adapted to the situation here, and we’re putting together a guide and strategies with input from the children. Our four main focuses are:

1. rights of the children – children learn about their rights and how to protect themselves
2. teamwork and artistic formation – children can explore their own belonging through singing, dancing, drawing, etc
3. protective schools – we work with schools and the educational system
4. protective families – we work with parents.

Contributed by a humanitarian field worker in Colombia

protect children (for example, keeping children at or closer to home, changing responsibilities for collecting water/firewood, etc).

Another example is regular risk mapping (linking with mapping also done by children and parents) that identifies areas within communities which pose the greatest threats of sexual violence to children (for example, schools, military barracks, markets, and outskirts of towns and villages). Doing such mapping at a community level and including similar mapping done by children and parents can help communities address risks themselves and help them take better responsibility for the protection of children.

An additional action on early warning that could be taken at the international level is that the existing matrix of Early-Warning Indicators of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence<sup>93</sup> adopted by UN Action in December 2012 could be expanded to include child-specific indicators.

#### SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS, INCLUDING CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEES

Child protection committees are groups of community members who volunteer to work together to protect children, offering support, information and referrals. Child protection committees can play a key role in mediation with families and authorities, in providing direct support to children (and families) and ongoing monitoring of security situations, and in referring children and families to appropriate services. Their status in the community means they have the capacity to intervene in the early stages of a crisis, or in time of peace, to monitor and prevent sexual violence. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire the child protection committees have been speaking with UN peacekeeping missions, emphasising the need for strict adherence to ethical behaviour by visiting troops.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that community-based child protection groups safeguard children in the course of their work and that these groups themselves follow international norms and standards on the care and protection of children.

#### DEVELOPING REFERRAL PATHWAYS AND PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS TO ENSURE THEY MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

Save the Children's work with survivors of sexual violence tends to focus on establishing referral pathways (to refer child survivors to local medical facilities, for example) and rehabilitation programmes, as well as advocating for child-focused services and working to build the capacity of medical personnel, security staff, lawyers and police.

Often the NGO, or the local umbrella network of NGOs, has agreements with health centres and hospitals to provide free health services, or has secured international NGO funding for medical care, at least to a certain level. Confidential spaces should be available in health centres for private consultations. Children may also be referred to other actors who can provide support such as livelihoods training. As with education, reinserting children through vocational training is essential to empower them and enable them to recover a role as contributors to their families and community.

Service providers should be trained in adequate and quality provision of child protection services such as medical care, including post-exposure prophylaxis, psychological assistance and legal aid. NGOs refer child survivors to local medical facilities and will often accompany them for support during treatment.

Another way in which child protection staff will support child survivors of sexual violence and abuse is through direct support from social workers or case workers. It is often through such support that children feel that they can disclose previous experiences of violence and abuse, and case workers can help refer the child to appropriate support in a safe and confidential manner, preferably through existing referral pathways. Mobile technologies have been used in some contexts to improve the ability of social workers to identify and monitor vulnerable children and to map social workers and community resources to optimise services for vulnerable children.<sup>94</sup>

Each armed conflict will affect children differently, and ethnic, religious and cultural considerations will be different. Children and adolescents also have very different needs. For a young child, the focus will be on survival, and in particular early childhood development, including health, nutrition and protection, in collaboration with caregivers. Older children

will need socialisation, intellectual growth and skill development. During adolescence, children will start to take adult responsibilities and roles, and sometimes fill the role of breadwinner. Boys and girls also have different protection and security needs. International and national responses must be quick, effective, and tailored to the uniqueness of children's needs.

## 2 EMPOWER CHILDREN AND THEIR COMMUNITIES (ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND GIRLS)

Gender and power inequalities – present long before conflict erupts but exacerbated by the social and institutional breakdown brought on by war – are among the most potent root causes of sexual violence. Building the voice, participation, resources, assets and agency of those least powerful in a society – including children themselves – is therefore an important part of preventing sexual violence.

### SUPPORTING CHILD-LED GROUPS AND INCREASING CHILDREN'S VOICE AND PARTICIPATION

*“At the project we learn about children's rights... We used to play a lot, go to the library, play sports, write books... I've written three books. The first book is called Women who Bend but Don't Break... At the project, we also watched a lot of videos about violence against women, about abuse, about reporting it, and we learnt a lot about our rights... I had a time of great sadness, but thanks to the project it has now passed.”*

– Salome, aged 12, was sexually assaulted when she was eight and now attends a project in Colombia supported by Save the Children which aims to keep children safe from violence and offer them support<sup>25</sup>

Much of Save the Children's work on increasing children's voice and participation is conducted through child-led clubs and children's clubs. These groups of children and youths can provide effective vehicles for a range of empowerment and awareness-raising activities, including life skills programmes, peer support networks and child-led education. All of these interventions are designed to increase the capacity and resources of children and their communities to prevent and reduce violence. Empowerment is of course most effective when it prioritises children's needs and rights, is accountable to them and sees their empowerment and rights as ends in themselves.

Life skills programmes and training help children to develop social and personal skills to protect themselves against violence. Key components of life skills training include understanding of:

- sexual and reproductive health (for boys and girls)
- physical and social environments that can put children at greater risk of violence and abuse
- how to develop communication and negotiation skills as well as better social skills
- issues of behaviour and attitudes around gender differences, which can in turn promote improved gender equality from childhood.

Closely linked to life skills programmes are peer support groups, which enable groups of children to discuss in a safe, confidential and age-appropriate environment their concerns about the risks of sexual violence. Through these groups, children and youths can also access information and practical help related to health, protection, education, safe and meaningful vocational training, and employment/income-generating opportunities.

Programme evaluations have found that these kinds of empowerment approaches can help to prevent sexual violence and to improve how children feel about themselves. In Sierra Leone, for example, girls who participated in life skills training said that the information was very relevant to their lives, made them feel more confident, and helped them to make their own decisions. Similarly, in eastern DRC, children who participated in children's clubs reported that the groups helped them to respond to some of the greatest protection concerns affecting children.

### SUPPORTING PARENTS

Positive parenting courses and family-strengthening initiatives increase parents' and carers' knowledge of how to protect children from sexual violence and other neglect and abuse, and increase their skills in protecting their children. Parenting courses can provide guidance and support to parents in discussing sensitive issues around sex with their children, and can help them develop strategies to deal with difficult behaviour which could result in children leaving home and being exposed to risky sexual survival strategies.

Such parenting interventions are also key in helping address attitudes and behaviours of both mothers and fathers that can perpetuate negative and discriminatory beliefs about gender inequality and masculinity.



## ENSURING CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES HAVE A SAFE WAY TO EARN A LIVING EVEN IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Livelihoods-related interventions include programmes aimed at boosting girls' and boys' enrolment in school, and, particularly for the adolescents, at increasing their involvement in micro-credit and cash transfer programmes, where livelihood activities such as vocational training and micro-credit are combined with life-skills training. These initiatives reduce the adolescents' vulnerability to child marriage, transactional sex and sexual violence, and also help them avoid marginalisation and stigmatisation if they have been victims of sexual violence.

Micro-finance initiatives targeted at adolescents, for example, increase their access to and control over assets and resources. Other activities are usually attached to the credit, such as life skills and vocational training and HIV prevention activities. As well as building skills, these activities help girls and boys to build community networks.

## 3 CHANGE SOCIAL NORMS TO REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

### RAISING AWARENESS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG CHILDREN AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

*“The people who have had this happen to them, others don't leave them alone about it. People shout at them. They haven't said anything to me, but other girls have told me that boys have shouted at them. They shout things like ‘Don't touch her, because she has AIDS and you'll be infected if you touch her.’ How can we stop this? Everyone needs education.”*

– Sandra, aged 15, who was raped by a family member at the age of five in Colombia<sup>96</sup>

Raising awareness about, and understanding of, sexual violence among government officials, the military, the police, communities, families and children is an important starting point in changing behaviours. To challenge the way children are viewed and treated requires interventions that look at individual behaviours and attitudes, as well as at the norms that govern community and social institutions.

Save the Children's efforts to prevent such violence are rooted in addressing the cultural and social

norms, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violations. Prevention activities include awareness raising and training with children's groups, camp committees, village elders and child protection committees. In these activities it is crucial to work with men and boys, and the whole community. In many cases, awareness-raising campaigns will be designed and led by children themselves and may include creative approaches such as calendars, skit/theatre competitions, radio and TV spots.

An example of a sexual violence awareness-raising campaign comes from Lebanon, where training entitled “Kid Power” was aimed at Iraqi refugee children. It began with a survey of selected members of the refugee population who revealed major problems with sexual harassment. On the basis of that information, training was provided to school children on how to protect themselves and to react to inappropriate overtures.

### TACKLING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Many programmes that address sexual violence against adults focus on improving the empowerment of women and addressing gender inequalities. Building from this approach, programmes that address sexual violence against children should also address gender inequality, as well as the manipulation of power between adults and children, which is also a driver of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse.

In Nepal, for example, Save the Children developed a curriculum to tackle gender norms. Nine activities encourage children to talk about their hopes and dreams, respect and communication, and about what is fair and unfair. The activities take place in community-based clubs for children aged between 10 and 14 and are facilitated by former club members aged 18 to 20. The activities have brought about positive changes in attitudes to gender norms, roles and responsibilities. For example, the proportion of children thinking it was ‘OK for a man to hit his wife’ dropped from more than 40% to less than 5%. The proportion of boys and girls agreeing that both men and women can make decisions about financial matters went up from 40% to 80%, and the number of children thinking that boys who help out with chores are weak dropped from 60% to 20%.<sup>97</sup>

## WORKING WITH MEN AND BOYS

Save the Children is supporting a relatively new body of work, which has developed from the recognition that working with men and boys is as important to tackling gender inequality as working with girls and women.

The most successful of these interventions include community education approaches, and frank and open discussions about gender roles and masculinity, in an effort to transform gender norms. Many focus on dialogue, self-exploration and expression of feelings, and engage men in exercises to help them question their own discriminatory practices, reflect on the social construction of masculinity, and consider the methods they use to exercise power.

Topics are tailored to local contexts but generally include gender roles and masculinities, relationships, caring for children and families, drugs and alcohol, HIV and AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, and violence. Interventions have led to a change in attitudes around gender roles and responsibilities in the home, with men and boys undertaking more household work and sharing decision-making. Attitudes around violence against girls and women, including rape, have also been improved, and communication between husbands and wives has increased.

## INCREASING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POST-CONFLICT PLANNING AND PEACE-BUILDING

Despite the fact that women, adolescent girls, and girls account for a high percentage of the victims of sexual violence in times of war, and suffer much of the socio-economic consequences of the conflict, very few women are included in peace processes. A range of measures can help increase women's representation in peace processes, such as investments in mediation, capacity-building for women leaders, and provision of special security and childcare arrangements for participants. Alongside formal negotiations, women's rights groups and activists seek to voice women's concerns and priorities. It is critical to support those efforts and provide specific resources for women civil society leaders.

Women in many conflict-affected countries have organised themselves politically to demand greater participation in peace-building processes, and have cooperated in an extraordinary manner to protect children's rights and provide care for children and adolescents.

## 4 REFORM LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS AND BUILD POLITICAL WILL TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

### NATIONAL

#### **Strengthening national legal and policy frameworks – and ensuring their enforcement – to address sexual violence**

Strengthening national legal and policy frameworks to address sexual violence – and ensuring their enforcement – is of key significance in tackling the problem of sexual violence against children, both during and outside conflict. In addition to strengthening national criminal laws to criminalise, and impose heavy penalties for, rape and sexual violence, laws and policies can help to address gender attitudes, social norms and other underlying causes of sexual violence, including discrimination.

Governments should ensure that international criminal law as codified in the Rome Statute is incorporated into national law, in particular the international law definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity to include rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Addressing the underlying gender attitudes and social norms through the strengthening of national laws and policies relevant to rape and sexual violence is a crucial element of Save the Children's work in a number of countries. The definitions and criminal laws regulating rape and sexual violence in peacetime are key, as are the laws relating to child marriage, statutory rape and domestic violence. In many countries, such as Liberia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Afghanistan, Save the Children has contributed to the development and adoption of child rights legislation. In Sierra Leone, Save the Children has been serving on a legal task force to create the Sex Offenders' Bill and marriage laws that provide children with better protection from exploitation.

#### **Ensuring that national armies and police forces are trained and screened and former combatants are properly reintegrated**

##### *National armies*

There is a need for militaries to develop and implement rigorous recruitment, selection and screening procedures and to undergo training in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection, as

well as in respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Save the Children has trained military personnel in child rights and child protection in Africa since 1998 and in the Middle East since 2011. Training alone is, of course, not sufficient to protect children from sexual violence perpetrated by military actors. But in our experience training can help to instil an understanding of sexual violence against children, how damaging it can be, and how military personnel can be held accountable for such violence.

A Ugandan officer who had undergone training in Kenya says: “Before I was trained on child rights and protection... my knowledge of the two was very traditional and quite narrow. However, after the training, the urge to arrest and prosecute those committing violations against children, including Uganda People’s Defence Force soldiers, became a priority. For example, I arrested a soldier who got involved and sexually exploited a young girl in Gulu military barracks, and because of this his contract was terminated.”<sup>98</sup>

Another approach is to develop Child Protection Units (CPU) to hold the military accountable for sexual violence. In The Gambia there is a CPU at Defence Headquarters, and all military units have child protection officers under the supervision of the CPU. These officers monitor and report any child abuse or exploitation by soldiers within their units.

#### *National police forces*

For many adolescent and child victims of sexual violence, reporting the crime to the police is a first and necessary step towards seeking protection, assistance and, ultimately, justice. For this reason it is important that police forces operating during and after conflicts are competently trained and committed to ensuring that police services are gender-sensitive and provide services that meet the particular needs of the adolescent and child victims of sexual violence. Save the Children is, together with UNICEF, working with several police training institutes in West and Central Africa to institutionalise child protection training in the police training curricula.

#### *Release and reintegration/disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration*

Child- and gender-sensitive release and reintegration and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes can help to prevent sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings. Continued attention should be given within release or demobilisation

processes to completely breaking contact and influence of commanders with children to help prevent exploitative control over them. Adequate access to both social and economic reintegration support for adolescents will also help them secure decent work (employment or self-employment) that is not exploitative.

An essential part of DDR processes that include adult combatants is the provision of suitable social and economic reintegration support for adult combatants which sits within a broader framework of post-conflict community social and economic reconstruction. Such reintegration and reconstruction must be planned and put in place before combatants are released, so that overall economic recovery can be addressed at the same time as a likely increase in available workforce, and so that preferential treatment of former combatants or non-former combatants for training and livelihood opportunities does not jeopardise social reintegration and stability.

#### **Strengthening national health systems**

It is often difficult or impossible for children who have been sexually abused to obtain adequate medical care. In many countries affected by armed conflict, healthcare infrastructure – often already severely under-resourced – has broken down completely in many regions with the advent of war. It is either destroyed or looted by combatants or becomes obsolete or neglected, with unhygienic conditions and no water or electricity supply. International medical and humanitarian NGOs often provide their own healthcare programmes, or heavily assist the state health facilities to enable them to provide at least a minimum service.

*“My mum was in the market [the day I was raped], so she wasn’t there when I got home. So I just went straight to bed. I was too ashamed and scared to ring to tell her what had happened. But the next day I knew I had to tell her, so I rang her and explained what had happened... She came home and took me to the local health centre but there was no one there who could help me, so we returned home.”*

– Myriam, aged 15, who was raped in the DRC<sup>99</sup>

For child survivors of sexual violence, the difficulties in receiving medical treatment for the illnesses or injuries brought on by rape represent yet a further violation of their rights. Responding to the health needs of rape survivors and rebuilding the state provision of basic healthcare is an essential

springboard for the future social and economic development of a society ravaged by war.

### **Strengthening national institutions for education**

For child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence, as for any child or young person affected by armed conflict, education often represents the best way out of marginalisation or entrenched poverty. In such contexts, poverty affects the lives of many children, increases their vulnerability and may exacerbate recruitment by armed groups or involvement in prostitution where protective environments have broken down. For those recruited by armed groups, or those who become involved in prostitution, poverty might also have been one of the main factors that made them so vulnerable. Supporting these children to return to learning or to attend school for the first time is an essential part of the healing process.

In conflict and post-conflict situations, governments often devote very limited public resources to public education, or do not allocate adequate budgets for education in conflict-affected areas. In many cases, the burden of securing education for children falls on communities; the costs of maintaining a child in school often fall directly on parents or guardians. Many families cannot afford education in general, and may be forced to make tough choices on who they send to school. Girls are overwhelmingly disadvantaged when parents balance the costs of education with the perceived benefits of sending boys to school. In particular, girls who may have become pregnant as a result of rape may be further marginalised from the education system.

The use of accelerated learning programmes (ALPs), alternative basic education centres which use flexible and relevant curricula for children and adolescents affected by conflict, are a way of reintegrating children affected by conflict, and help ensure they have catch-up opportunities. In Angola, for example, Save the Children's ALP classes have created opportunities for young mothers (aged 14–17) to attend school. They bring their babies to school and are allowed to leave the class with the baby if necessary. Without these ALP classes these young women would never have access to basic education.

Moreover, as in any conflict situation, ensuring adolescents and youths have access to education and training programmes that focus on building their skills and mobilising them as active citizens will empower

them, give them adequate skills and capacity to gain employment, and enable them to recover a role in their communities.

### **Strengthening national child protection systems**

Though perhaps less well-understood than health and education systems, national child protection systems have an important role to play in protecting children from violence in sustainable ways over time. A national child protection system consists of: a set of laws and policies which comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); a central government coordination mechanism with a clear mandate to prevent and respond to child protection concerns; preventive and responsive child protection services; regulation and monitoring at all levels; a committed work force with competence and mandate; and data collection and awareness-raising.<sup>100</sup>

At times when government is unable or unwilling to provide the resources or coordination of child protection services, community-based child protection groups (such as those described in the “Deliver” approaches above) may play a very important role as the first line of response for children at risk of or victims of violence and abuse in developing local preventive and remedial activities.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Strengthening protection mandates of peacekeeping operations**

Peacekeepers can play an important role in protecting civilians from sexual violence during armed conflict. Since the early 1990s, mandates for UN peacekeeping missions explicitly include provisions for the protection of civilians. But in many cases, peacekeeping missions are not given the capacity by the UN Security Council to provide proper security to civilians and assistance to victims of sexual violence.

Because of the huge and complex terrains in which they operate, UN peacekeepers are not always able to ensure proper patrolling, monitoring and protection of the civilian population, despite the information which filters through to them of possible attacks in the area. Peacekeeping troops sometimes misunderstand or underestimate the risks faced by the civilian population because of language barriers and lack of interpreters, or simply because a very narrow interpretation of the mandate prevents them from acting. In addition, newly deployed units might not receive specific training in

civilian protection, as pre-deployment training varies between member states.

It is essential that the UN leadership as a whole insist that the mandate to protect civilians, including children specifically, is understood and prioritised by all peacekeeping forces. The priority given to protection of civilians in peacekeeping missions' mandates has to be taken on board and translated into action by all components of the mission. It is crucial that all peacekeeping missions have a clear mandate to protect children from attacks or recruitment, and also have the resources and expertise to support international aid workers and local civil society organisations that provide services to, and advocate on behalf of, child survivors of sexual violence.

### **Supporting international coordination, including through the UN**

The coordination mechanisms of the UN that can play a role in preventing sexual violence in conflict are chronically under-financed. At present the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) – the global-level mechanism for coordinating prevention and response to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings – has just two short-term consultancy-based staff responsible for global coordination.

The Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) on conflict-related sexual violence, Zainab Bangura, has a large mandate (created by Security Council Resolution 1888) to report on and monitor sexual violence in conflict but a small team and funds with which to do this. Similarly, the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, who has the remit to monitor and report on all grave crimes against children in conflict, often has insufficient budget even to travel to conflict-affected countries to bear witness. With minimal additional resources, the international coordination mechanisms of the UN could work more effectively to prevent sexual violence in conflict from becoming widespread and focus on prevention rather than cure.

Another example of international coordination that should be supported and replicated is the Protocol

on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children, agreed by the governments of the 11 member states of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (including the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Burundi, the Central African Republic and Sudan). It is the first international agreement to focus exclusively on criminalising and punishing sexual violence against women and children. The protocol represents an important commitment by these states to protect women and children against the impunity of sexual violence and is very progressive. As well as setting out model national legislation for states to adopt, the protocol recognises the importance of making criminal procedures sensitive to the needs of the survivors, and calls upon member states to establish legal and medical procedures for assisting survivors of sexual violence.

### **Supporting existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms**

The UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), mandated by UN Resolution 1612, has a vital role to play in preventing and responding to grave violations of children's rights in conflict; it is the only process of recording human rights violations which reports directly to the Security Council. It provides a mechanism through which individual incidents of rape and sexual violence committed against children by armed actors can be collected in a confidential, timely and reliable manner and reported together with other grave violations.

The MRM is triggered when the UN records and verifies instances of one or more of four of the six grave violations – recruitment and use of child soldiers; killing and maiming; rape and sexual violence; and deliberate attacks on schools and hospitals.

It is crucial that commitment to addressing grave violations against children in conflict, particularly rape and sexual assault, is continued at national and global levels, through political and diplomatic advocacy, good resourcing of programmatic responses, and through showing accountability to children and communities.

## 2 GAPS IN FUNDING FOR PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES

Programmes to protect children and women from sexual violence and to provide essential services to survivors of sexual violence are rarely part of the first stage of an emergency response, despite the prevalence of sexual violence against children and women in conflict-affected countries and humanitarian settings more generally.

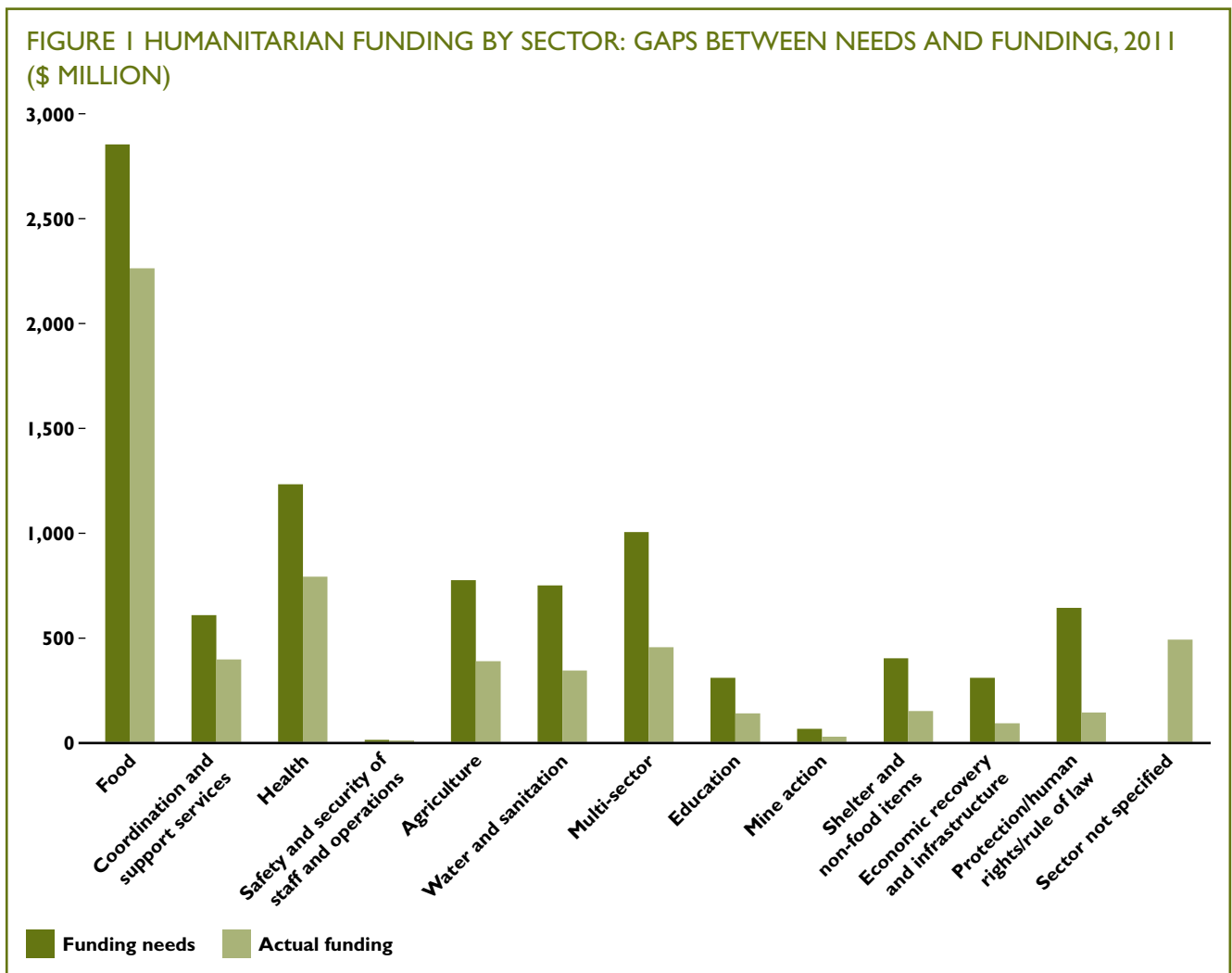
As we've outlined in our Deliver–Empower–Change–Reform model above, a range of approaches is required in preventing violence and protecting children and women from it. In humanitarian response, funding is generally allocated to 13 sectors.<sup>101</sup> The

most important for protecting children and women from violence are the protection and human rights/ rule of law sectors (which includes child protection in emergencies (CPIE), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), among other areas of protection).

By comparing funding for protection with that for other sectors such as health, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, we can see that protection is often at the bottom of the priority list when humanitarian funds are allocated; funding needs for this work are almost always less well met than the average across other sectors (see Table I: Humanitarian funding by sector, 2011).

TABLE I: HUMANITARIAN FUNDING BY SECTOR IN 2011<sup>102</sup>

		Funding needs (\$US)	Commitments/ contributions (\$US)	%
1	Food	2,848,202,388	2,257,011,715	79
2	Coordination and support services	603,597,993	392,401,072	65
3	Health	1,228,381,112	787,218,660	64
4	Safety and security of staff and operations	7,270,516	4,099,367	56
5	Agriculture	771,350,586	384,924,176	50
6	Water and sanitation	745,971,596	340,419,671	46
8	Multi-sector	999,783,070	451,601,069	45
7	Education	305,981,906	136,518,374	45
10	Mine action	62,715,909	25,476,855	41
11	Shelter and non-food items	399,089,308	147,445,839	37
12	Economic recovery and infrastructure	305,978,894	88,709,973	29
13	<b>Protection/human rights/rule of law</b>	<b>639,040,697</b>	<b>140,709,422</b>	<b>22</b>
15	Sector not specified	–	486,926,155	N/A
<b>Total</b>		<b>8,917,363,975</b>	<b>5,643,462,348</b>	
<b>Average</b>				<b>48</b>



When we look at funding by sector graphically (see Figure I: Humanitarian funding by sector: Gaps between needs and funding), it also becomes clear that the absolute funding needs for protection are smaller than the needs in other sectors, such as food and health. The full funding needs identified for protection in 2011 were \$639 million, just 7% of the total humanitarian funding needs (\$8,917 million).

The recent emergency due to the conflict in Mali provides an illustration of the problem with funding to protect children and women from violence in emergencies. At first glance, it appears that the protection sector in the Mali response is relatively

well funded in comparison with other sectors: at the time of writing, only 4% of the overall funding requests for Mali have been met, but 8% of the funding needs for protection have been met.<sup>103</sup> But if we look more closely at the projects in this sector we can see that none of the proposed 22 projects related to protection from violence or child protection has been funded.<sup>104</sup> A Save the Children child protection specialist in Mali described the situation thus: “Despite the fact that we have demonstrated that child protection is a life-saving sector, it is still overlooked by donors and rarely treated as a crucial element of an emergency response. Save the Children has committed to include child protection as part of the first-phase

response. An increase in child protection funding in Mali can save children's lives and protect them from the abuses that are prolific in any conflict situation."<sup>105</sup>

Within the protection sector, it is funding for the Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE) and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) sub-sectors that is most directly related to protecting children and women from violence and to responding to the needs of child survivors of violence. Unfortunately, funding for CPIE and SGBV is not separated out in the data collected by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), so it is difficult to track. But with some manual analysis of the data provided by the OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) database,<sup>106</sup> we are able to make some initial conclusions about humanitarian funding for CPIE and SGBV in recent years.<sup>107</sup>

## UNPREDICTABILITY OF FUNDING FLOWS

When we look at the total funding for the protection component of appeals for CPIE and SGBV between 2007 and 2012, we can see that the figures for CPIE especially vary widely from a low of \$17 million in 2008 to a high of \$38 million in 2010 (see Figure 2).

When we look at funding for CPIE and SGBV by the G8 countries<sup>108</sup> alone in 2010 and 2011, we can see that the proportion of humanitarian funding that donors allocate to CPIE and SGBV varies widely from year to year.

While we do not currently have sufficient data to assess how these figures compare in terms of funding needs in each of these years, our own programming experience indicates that the unpredictability of funding for child protection is, in part, related to shifting donor priorities, and not just to fluctuations in need (see box: Funding for child protection in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya).

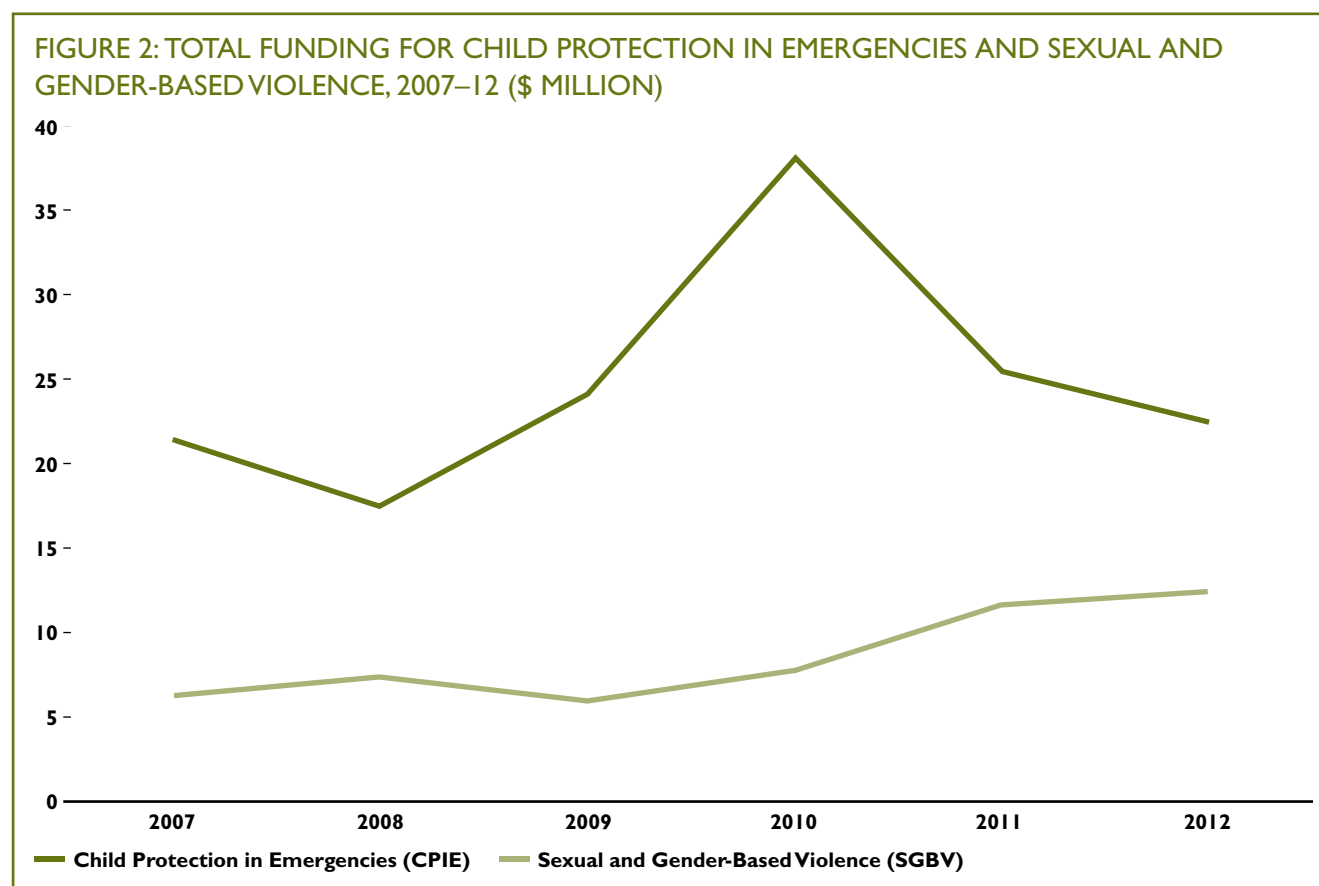
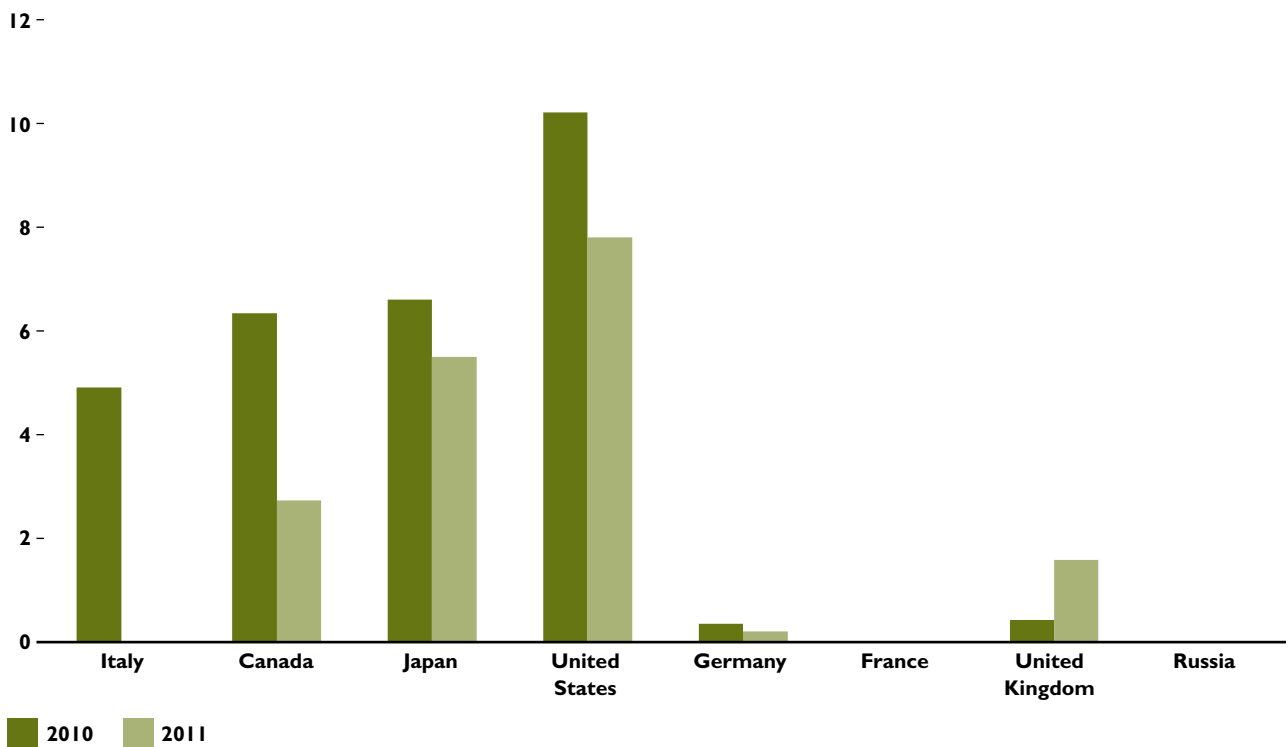




FIGURE 3: G8 COUNTRIES' FUNDING FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES (CPIE) AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV), 2010 AND 2011 (\$ MILLION)



## FUNDING FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN THE DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA

Save the Children has been running a child protection programme in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya since late 2006. It includes child-friendly spaces, children's clubs, child welfare committees and a foster parents' association. In order to reach 55,000 vulnerable children, the programme requires funding of roughly \$2 million per year.

This child protection programme has always relied on a variety of donors providing emergency and refugee assistance funding of no more than 12 months in duration in each case. As a result, funding has fluctuated unpredictably over the last six years of operations, while programming needs have increased incrementally.

The lack of predictability of donor funding for the programme has forced Save the Children on several occasions to choose between trying to continue the same programme with reduced funding, and reducing the services and the number of children assisted. The inconsistency of donor support has compelled Save the Children to diversify its funding base and to continually mobilise new resources in order to ensure the level of quality care and follow-up required to run an effective child protection programme.

## INCONSISTENCY IN FUNDING CHILD PROTECTION AMONG DONORS

There is a lack of agreement among humanitarian donors about the level of priority and urgency that should be attached to the funding of CPIE and SGBV. Looking at the data we have available for CPIE and SGBV, we can see that some donors seem to place a greater priority on CPIE and SGBV when allocating their humanitarian funding than others.

It is important to note that the protection work of some agencies (such as ICRC and UNHCR's work with refugees) is not included in the data we have available. It is also important to note that this table does not take into account the funding that these donors have provided to institutions such as UNICEF or to funds such as the Central Emergency Response

Fund, which may then allocate some of that funding to child protection. While these types of funding modalities are to be encouraged, it is also important for donors to allocate a portion of their funding directly to sectors such as CPIE and SGBV to ensure that funds are made available quickly, in the early stages of an emergency, to organisations working on the ground.

With sexual violence high on the agenda for the G8 foreign ministers in 2013, now is the time to look at the priority placed on funding for protection (including child protection and sexual and gender-based violence) in humanitarian response. G8 donors have the power to ensure that children and women are protected from violence and abuse in conflict-affected countries and humanitarian settings more generally.

TABLE 2: FUNDING FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) AS A % OF THEIR OVERALL HUMANITARIAN FUNDING BY 12 MAJOR DONORS, WITH G8 COUNTRIES HIGHLIGHTED (2007–12)<sup>109</sup>

	Total contributions to humanitarian appeals*	Contribution to sexual gender-based violence (SGBV)	Contribution to child protection in emergencies (CPIE)	Relative contribution analysis		
				SGBV as a % of total humanitarian appeals	CPIE as % of total humanitarian appeals	SGBV + CPIE as a share of total humanitarian appeals
1 Denmark	456,905,356	2,405,999	23,862,231	0.53	5.22	5.75
2 Italy	249,936,673	1,119,605	4,322,632	0.45	1.73	2.18
3 Sweden	1,560,239,183	10,317,450	18,693,370	0.66	1.20	1.86
4 Canada	1,418,668,208	4,428,194	14,710,150	0.31	1.04	1.35
5 Japan	1,976,038,736	3,945,246	22,571,422	0.20	1.14	1.34
6 Norway	1,122,351,941	7,514,551	4,663,275	0.67	0.42	1.09
7 European Commission	3,990,655,421	7,674,538	17,591,611	0.19	0.44	0.63
8 United States	10,164,640,935	13,164,737	32,650,459	0.13	0.32	0.45
9 Germany	784,702,624	–	3,134,923	0.00	0.40	0.40
10 France	248,370,238	325,667	655,000	0.13	0.26	0.39
11 United Kingdom	2,614,907,571	–	5,714,983	0.00	0.22	0.22
12 Russia	–	–	–	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,587,416,886</b>	<b>50,895,987</b>	<b>148,570,056</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>1.42</b>

\* Minus carry-over, various, CERF



## PAMELA, 17

When her village in DRC was attacked by soldiers, Pamela fled to a camp. But rather than finding safety, it was the start of a terrible ordeal.

*“I’d been in the camp for three days. I’d gone to collect water, and as I was leaving the water point I met three boys. They grabbed me. One took my legs and the other took my hands. I tried to fight them off.*

*“They took me to one of their houses. Two of the boys locked the door with me and the other boy inside.*

*“After the rape I wanted to leave the house and return home. But the people told my mother and she said I had to stay there. I didn’t want a husband because I was still a girl.*

*“In our culture if you’re taken by force [raped] you must stay with the man. You become his wife.*

*“The boy wanted me to leave and tried to force me back home but my mother refused. The community saw that I was pregnant and rejected me. After seven months my husband abandoned me.*

*“Then horrible things happened when I was having the baby. The baby died and I had a fistula [a hole between the vagina and rectum or vagina and bladder].”*

Pamela is receiving medical and psychological support from a partner organisation in Save the Children’s USHINDI project, which helps survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

# CONCLUSION

As the alarming statistics and personal accounts in this report show, in spite of the indications that children often make up the majority of survivors of sexual violence in conflict, *the scale of this issue has not been appreciated by the international community.* It is important to remember that the problem goes far deeper than we are able to recount here; many children who suffer sexual violence never go on to report because of their fear of reprisal or stigma or because they are ignorant of the channels that could assist them.

Sexual violence echoes power differentials; children, especially girls, often have the least power in a community or society. *In most contexts girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence,* and it has an impact on all areas of their lives, with long-term physical, psychological and social effects. It can even lead to girls undertaking transactional sex to survive. But boys too suffer sexual violence, and their very different experiences of violence, and its implications, are rarely considered at all.

*Along with child survivors of sexual violence, witnesses also need protection and response.* Children who have seen members of their own family or community being sexually assaulted also need protection and support. Sexual violence strikes at the heart of families and communities. In conflict, this is often exactly what the perpetrators intend.

*The collapse of the rule of law and societal norms means that it is not just armed groups that engage in sexual violence, but also civilian members of communities.* In countries where women and girls suffer grave inequalities and human rights abuses in peacetime, this experience is continued (and exacerbated) in conflict.

Despite the great challenges we face in addressing the issue of sexual violence – not least the overlapping and complicated root causes of the problem, under-reporting, taboos around discussing the issue in most countries, and lack of both funding and political will – *there are things we can do to end sexual violence in conflict. It need not be an inevitable by-product of war.* As we have set out in this report, we can *deliver child-focused services, empower children and their communities, change attitudes and behaviours, reform laws and institutions and build political will.*

But as we've also demonstrated in this report, in spite of what we know about how to build barriers between children and sexual violence in conflict, *protection lies at the bottom of the priority list when humanitarian funds are allocated.* The gaps between needs and actual funding commitments are large but the amounts of money required are small – with the necessary political will, the G8 countries alone could ensure that protection needs are met in every humanitarian response.

# WHAT WE'RE CALLING FOR

## TOP ASKS FOR G8 COUNTRIES

### **1 Place children at the centre of international action on sexual violence in conflict.**

- Children, and especially girls, often make up the majority of survivors of sexual violence in conflict, but their particular needs for protection and child-sensitive response, because of their young age and stage of development, are too frequently neglected in policy, research and data collection, the design of intervention strategies and the allocation of funding.

### **2 Put your money where your mouths are and ensure that funding for protection is part of every humanitarian response.**

- Protection (including child protection) should be considered essential, not optional, in humanitarian response and receive the same level of priority as other sectors such as food, shelter and water.
- G8 countries should commit to contributing their fair share of funding for protection (including child protection) in every emergency, and this should be predictable over time. As we've shown here, the gaps in funding are large but the amounts required are relatively small. G8 countries range from spending 0% to just over 2% of their overall humanitarian funding on child protection and sexual and gender-based violence, as compared with an average of 1.4% across other major donors.
- G8 countries should commit to participating in a donor meeting (including donors beyond the G8 countries) on protection from violence in humanitarian emergencies before the end of 2013 to call for better monitoring and reporting systems for sexual violence (with disaggregation by age), and to ensure sufficient funding and coordination of Deliver–Empower–Change–Reform approaches to preventing and addressing sexual violence.

### **3 Exert maximum pressure on governments and/or armed groups to respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, by immediately halting all acts of rape and other sexual violence and recruitment or use of children, and ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice.**

- Armed groups and governments recruiting children into their forces must be pressed by G8 countries to release all children, including girls, associated with armed forces and groups, immediately and unconditionally. DDR programmes must also respect and protect children's human rights.
- G8 countries should invest in establishing vetting mechanisms in affected countries to exclude from national armies any individual against whom there are credible allegations of having been responsible for crimes under international law or other serious human rights violations, including sexual violence and rape.

### **4 Ensure that all relevant parts of the UN system have the necessary resources, skills and political backing to address the issue of sexual violence in conflict.**

- Peacekeeping troops must have a clear mandate to provide effective protection to civilians, and must prioritise the protection and promotion of children's rights.
- With minimal additional resources, the coordination mechanisms of the UN (including the GBV AoR, the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict, and the MRM) could work more effectively to prevent children from being affected by sexual violence, and respond better to child survivors of sexual violence.
- Increased investment in data collection to better understand the scale of sexual violence in conflict is essential, and this work must capture the experience of girls under the age of 15 as well as that of boys.

# ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> All names throughout the report have been changed to protect identities
- <sup>2</sup> Save the Children interview, 2013
- <sup>3</sup> Save the Children interview, 2013
- <sup>4</sup> As we describe in Part I, Section A, it is very difficult to access data on the scale of the problem of sexual violence against children in conflict. But we have gathered a number of data points from a range of countries, which indicate that children make up a large proportion of survivors of sexual violence and sometimes the majority (see Part I, Section A for the citations of these).
- <sup>5</sup> This model builds closely on the Department for International Development (DFID)'s recently developed Theory of Change on Violence Against Women and Girls. See here: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/1/how-to-note-vawg-1.pdf> and here: [http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/storage/VAWG\\_guidance2\\_community%20programming1.pdf](http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/storage/VAWG_guidance2_community%20programming1.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> This report uses the term 'children' to mean girls and boys under the age of 18 years. There are some references to adolescents when their situation needs to be highlighted specifically.
- <sup>7</sup> This is based on the definition of sexual violence found in the World Report on Violence and Health. See World Health Organisation (WHO), *World Report on Violence and Health*, WHO, 2002, p 149.
- <sup>8</sup> Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, *Without Consent: A report on the joint review of the prosecution and investigation of rape offences*, HMCPSP, 2007, <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/without-consent-20061231.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-fast-facts-statistics-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-.html>
- <sup>10</sup> Marije Stoltenborgh, Marinus H van Ijzendoorn, Eveline M Euser and Marian J Bakermans-Kranenburg, "A Global Perspective on Child Sexual Abuse: Meta-Analysis of Prevalence Around the World", *Child Maltreatment* 2011 16: 79 originally published online 21 April 2011. <http://russwilson.coffeecup.com/Stoltenborgh%202012%20-%20Global%20Perspective%20on%20Child%20Sexual%20Abuse.pdf>. We have focused specifically on the prevalence rates that are "According to NIS-3" definition of sexual abuse as it corresponds most closely to the definition of sexual violence used in this report. See table on page 85 for these figures.
- <sup>11</sup> This calculation is based on applying the average global child sexual abuse prevalence rate (according to the NIS-3 definition of sexual abuse), which is an average of 15.95% across females and males, to just the population of children living in conflict-affected countries. The list of countries comes from the World Bank's "Harmonized List Of Fragile Situations" for 2013 and the population figures of children under the age of 18 from UNICEF's *childinfo* statistical database.
- <sup>12</sup> Statistical assessments of the prevalence of sexual violence in conflict and of who is most affected are very difficult to come by, as we argue in this report. From the data we've gathered and from our own programme experience, we find that girls and boys under the age of 18 can make up a large part of the survivors of sexual violence, and often the majority. Other recent publications have found that children are less affected than adults by sexual violence in conflict (see, for example, Human Security Report Project, *Human Security Report 2012: Sexual Violence, Education, and War: Beyond the Mainstream Narrative* (Vancouver: Human Security Press, 2012) Human Security Report). We agree with the recommendations in this report for more investment in data collection and monitoring to better understand the nature of sexual violence in conflict, but also maintain that children are affected by sexual violence in large numbers and their rights and needs must be considered in policy, research, programming and funding allocations.
- <sup>13</sup> Calculated on the basis of data from IRC's GBV programmes reported in IRC, *Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse*, IRC, 2012, p 25: "In Sierra Leone, 73% of female survivors aided by the IRC are under the age of 18, with 23% under the age of 11. Almost all cases were sexual violence, specifically rape (97% for 0–11 year olds and 96% for 12–18 year olds)"
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/sierraleone/sierleon0103.pdf>
- <sup>15</sup> According to statistics gathered between January 2011 and August 2012 by the Ministry of Gender and Development in Liberia
- <sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Soldiers who rape, commanders who condone', 16 July 2009, p 7: [http://www.hrw.org/en/node/84366/section/7#\\_ftnref4](http://www.hrw.org/en/node/84366/section/7#_ftnref4)
- <sup>17</sup> Françoise Roth, Tamy Guberek, Amelia Hoover Green, Using Quantitative Data to Assess Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Colombia: Challenges and Opportunities, March 2011: [https://hrdag.org/content/colombia/SV-report\\_2011-04-26.pdf](https://hrdag.org/content/colombia/SV-report_2011-04-26.pdf)
- <sup>18</sup> IRC, *Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse*, IRC, 2012
- <sup>19</sup> A Kolbe and R Hutson, 'Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: A random survey of households', *The Lancet*, Volume 368, Issue 9538, pp 864–73
- <sup>20</sup> Global Protection Cluster, Child Protection, Côte d'Ivoire, *Vulnerabilities, Violence and Serious Violations of Child Rights*, 2011
- <sup>21</sup> All names throughout the report have been changed to protect identities
- <sup>22</sup> Save the Children interview, 2013
- <sup>23</sup> UN Secretary General's *Annual Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict*, March 2013
- <sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Afghanistan: Don't prosecute sexually assaulted children', 10 February 2013. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/09/afghanistan-don-t-prosecute-sexually-assaulted-children>
- <sup>25</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>26</sup> For more on the weaknesses of international data collection on sexual violence in conflict please see Human Security Report Project, *Human Security Report 2012: Sexual Violence, Education, and War – Beyond the mainstream narrative*, HSRP, 2012
- <sup>27</sup> Save the Children UK recognises adolescence as the age range 13–18 years, i.e., the period between puberty and adulthood. (The age range of youth is recognised as 15–21 years.)
- <sup>28</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>29</sup> S Sivakumaran, 'Lost in translation: UN responses to sexual violence against men and boys in situations of armed conflict', *International Review of the Red Cross*, 92:877, March 2010, pp 259–77, p 260
- <sup>30</sup> Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice Network, *Gender Relations, Sexual Violence and the Effects of Conflict on Women and Men in North Kivu, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Preliminary Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)*, 2012
- <sup>31</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>32</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013

- <sup>33</sup> Save the Children interview, 2012
- <sup>34</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>35</sup> SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria, 28 January 2013*, p 1: <http://reliefweb.int/map/syrian-arab-republic/regional-analysis-syria-28-january-2013>
- <sup>36</sup> Observation from Save the Children's work
- <sup>37</sup> Child Protection Working Group, *Child Protection in Syria: Current situation and priorities*, CPWG, January 2013, p 2, <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Syria-Three-PagerFINAL.pdf>
- <sup>38</sup> Observation from Save the Children's work; Refugees International, 'Syrian women & girls: No safe refuge', 15 November 2012 <http://refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/syrian-women-girls-no-safe-refuge>
- <sup>39</sup> Save the Children, *Preliminary Gender Assessment Report, Dollo Ado Humanitarian Program*, December 2012
- <sup>40</sup> The reflections in this paragraph were raised during Save the Children-led focus group discussions that took place in December 2012.
- <sup>41</sup> Observations from Save the Children's work
- <sup>42</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>43</sup> Observation from Save the Children's work
- <sup>44</sup> UNICEF, *CAAC Bulletin for Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory*, UNICEF, May 2011, November 2011; UN Security Council, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict*, UN, 2011, S/2011/250 and 2012, A/66/782 – /2012/261, as detailed in C McCormick, *Monitoring, Reporting and Addressing Child Rights and Protection Violations in "Non-Listed" Countries: Experiences of NGOs in Israel/OPT*, Save the Children, 2012 (to be published)
- <sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Syria: sexual assault in detention', 15 June 2012.
- <sup>46</sup> Save the Children, *Sexual Violence Against Children in Emergencies: Review of current practices in prevention and response within Save the Children and the wider child protection in emergencies sector*, Save the Children UK (fort)
- <sup>47</sup> Benefance Congo. *La Prostitution des Enfants: Une Tragédie réelle. (Etude réalisée par l'ONG Benefance Congo sur les filles exploitées sexuelles à Beni et Oicha. 2011.*
- <sup>48</sup> Save the Children DRC Country Programme. *Children Don't Have a Choice – Transactional and commercial sex work in eastern DRC, 2013* (to be published)
- <sup>49</sup> Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict (February 2004) *Colombia's War on Children*, Watchlist, 2004, p 22
- <sup>50</sup> Some of this is accounted for in K Bolkovac, *The Whistleblower: Sex trafficking, military contractors, and one woman's fight for justice*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011
- <sup>51</sup> GBV Working Group, Uganda, 2005
- <sup>52</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>53</sup> Refugees who work with organisations on a casual basis to help deliver services.
- <sup>54</sup> Despite international statements (efforts) made to put a stop to these abuses and exploitation through advocacy, training and specific programmes involving a range of NGOs and other international bodies (such as the UN and the EU), there have been reports (and some convictions) of peacekeepers committing sexual offences in recent years, such as in Haiti and the DRC. See for example: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-16693441> and <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/second-reading/peacekeepers-gone-wild-how-much-more-abuse-will-the-un-ignore-in-congo/article4462151/>
- <sup>55</sup> Save the Children, *Children have no choice: Children's engagement in transactional sex in Eastern DRC* (to be published)
- <sup>56</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>57</sup> Article 100(1), Afghan Penal Code. See also Human Rights Watch (2012), "I had to run away": Imprisonment of Women and Girls for "Moral Crimes" in Afghanistan. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/03/29/i-had-run-away>
- <sup>58</sup> See e.g. Women Living Under Muslim Laws: the case of Afghanistan. 7 March 2013. Available at: <http://www.wluml.org/fr/node/8475>
- <sup>59</sup> Save the Children Sweden, *Children and Gender-Based Violence: An overview of existing conceptual frameworks*, Save the Children Sweden, 2007
- <sup>60</sup> Amnesty International, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Mass rape – time for remedies*, Amnesty International, October 2004, AFR 62/0 18/2004, p 14
- <sup>61</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>62</sup> Findings from Save the Children project consultations in Haute Uele District, Province Orientale, 2012
- <sup>63</sup> Dolan, Chris, "War is Not Yet Over": *Community Perceptions of Sexual Violence and its Underpinnings in Eastern DRC*, International Alert, 2010
- <sup>64</sup> Kelly, Jocelyn, *Rape in War: Motives of Militia in DRC*, Special Report 243. Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2010.
- <sup>65</sup> Save the Children UK Asia Regional Office, *Protection of Trafficking Victims in Thailand*, Save the Children UK, 2010
- <sup>66</sup> Focus group discussion with refugees who have fled Somalia, December 2012
- <sup>67</sup> As reported by a Save the Children local partner during a consultation on sexual violence, abuse and exploitation in Kinshasa, November 2012.
- <sup>68</sup> War Child, "All I want is to be happy and live a normal life" – A study of the experiences of 315 girls and young women living on the streets in Kinshasa. February 2010
- <sup>69</sup> Amnesty International, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Mass rape – time for remedies*, Amnesty International, October 2004, AFR 62/0 18/2004, p.14
- <sup>70</sup> Human Rights Watch, "We Will Teach You a Lesson": *Sexual violence against Tamils by Sri Lankan security forces*, HRW, 2013
- <sup>71</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>72</sup> Save the Children, *No One To Turn To: The under-reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and peacekeepers*, April 2008
- <sup>73</sup> International human rights treaties, which apply in situations of armed conflict as well as in peacetime, prohibit rape and sexual violence against children. This prohibition is found, for example, in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and more generally through the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has confirmed that violence against women is a form of discrimination and therefore prohibited under CEDAW.
- <sup>74</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>75</sup> Redress, *Reforming Sudan's Legislation on Rape and Sexual Violence*, Position Paper, September 2008. Available at: [http://www.redress.org/downloads/country-reports/Position%20Paper%20Rape%205%20SEPT%2008%20\\_3\\_.pdf](http://www.redress.org/downloads/country-reports/Position%20Paper%20Rape%205%20SEPT%2008%20_3_.pdf) at p. 23
- <sup>76</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013
- <sup>77</sup> See for example Astbury, J, "Services for victim/survivors of sexual assault: Identifying needs, interventions and provision of services in Australia", 2006 and Stein & Barrett-Connor, "Sexual Assault and Physical Health: Findings From a Population-Based Study of Older Adults," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 62:838–843 (2000)
- <sup>78</sup> Literature Review of Boys as Survivors and Perpetrators of Sexual Violence in Emergencies, Prepared for Save the Children Sweden by consultant Sara Marie Rasmussen, October 2012, p.22 (unpublished)
- <sup>79</sup> Democratic Republic of Congo, *Mass rape – time for remedies*, Amnesty International, October 2004, AFR62/018/2004, p.26
- <sup>80</sup> Democratic Republic of Congo, *Mass rape – time for remedies*, Amnesty International, October 2004, AFR62/018/2004, p.24
- <sup>81</sup> Save the Children and UNFPA, *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings*, Save the Children and UNFPA, 2009
- <sup>82</sup> Save the Children interview, 2013
- <sup>83</sup> See for example Davis David R. and Joel N. Kuritsky. 2002. "Violent Conflict and Its Impact on Health Indicators in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1980 to 1997," 2002; Ammons, Lila, "Consequences of War on African Countries"



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<sup>84</sup> See for example Holmes, M. M., Resnick, H. S., Kilpatrick, D. G., & Best, C. L. "Rape related pregnancy: Estimates and descriptive characteristics from a national sample of women," 1996, *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 175, 320-325, and Resnick, H. S., Acierno, R., & Kilpatrick, D. G., "Health impact of interpersonal violence: Medical and mental health outcomes," 1997, *Behavior Modification*, 23, 65-78.

<sup>85</sup> Democratic Republic of Congo, Mass rape – time for remedies, Amnesty International, October 2004, AFR62/018/2004, p.26

<sup>86</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013

<sup>87</sup> Save the Children interview, 2012

<sup>88</sup> For more on the issues facing children born of wartime rape see the UN Secretary General's *Annual Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict*, March 2013

<sup>89</sup> Save the Children interview, 2012

<sup>90</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013

<sup>91</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013

<sup>92</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013

<sup>93</sup> [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MatrixEarlyWarningIndicatorsCSV\\_UNAction2011.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MatrixEarlyWarningIndicatorsCSV_UNAction2011.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> M Mattila, *Mobile Technologies for Child Protection: A briefing note*, UNICEF, 2011. [http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/mobile\\_technologies\\_for\\_child\\_protection.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/mobile_technologies_for_child_protection.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013

<sup>96</sup> Save the Children interview, February 2013

<sup>97</sup> Save the Children, *An Equal Start: Why gender equality matters for child survival and maternal health*, June 2011: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/equal-start-why-gender-equality-matters-child-survival-and-maternal-health>

<sup>98</sup> Taken from training notes following child protection training conducted by Save the Children and UNICEF with the UPDF in Uganda

<sup>99</sup> Save the Children interview, 2013

<sup>100</sup> Save the Children, *Child Protection in the Post 2015 agenda: A thematic think piece* (Forthcoming)

<sup>101</sup> The 13 sectors are coordination and support services, protection and human rights/rule of law, shelter and non-food items, water and sanitation, agriculture, food, mine action, economic recovery and infrastructure, safety and security of staff and operations, education, multi-sector, health, and sector non-specific.

<sup>102</sup> 2011 was selected as, at the time of writing, changes were still being made to the 2012 figures. Financial Tracking Service (FTS), Consolidated & Flash Appeals 2011, Global requirements & funding per sector: [http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R30\\_y2011\\_\\_\\_11\\_March\\_2013\\_\(02\\_04\).pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R30_y2011___11_March_2013_(02_04).pdf)

<sup>103</sup> [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CAP\\_Mali\\_en\\_20130220.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CAP_Mali_en_20130220.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> [http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R32\\_A985\\_\\_\\_11\\_March\\_2013\\_\(02\\_04\).pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R32_A985___11_March_2013_(02_04).pdf)

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Save the Children staff member in Mali, February 2013

<sup>106</sup> All of the data in this section is Save the Children analysis of preliminary data kindly shared by consultants (Julian Murray and Joe Landry) engaged by the Global Protection Cluster. The full results of the GPC analysis of funding trends for protection are forthcoming, and some data may be subject to change.

<sup>107</sup> For an in-depth analysis of child protection funding trends from 2007 to 2009 please see Save the Children, *Too Little, Too Late: Child protection funding in emergencies*, 2011. <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/content/library/documents/too-little-too-late-child-protection-funding-emergencies>

<sup>108</sup> Our analysis is restricted to the data reported through the UNOCHA Financial Tracking System (FTS)

<sup>109</sup> Due to data availability, this table only shows data for 12 major donors.

# UNSPEAKABLE CRIMES AGAINST **CHILDREN**

## Sexual violence in conflict

*“I can’t forget what happened. My head is full of these things – what happened to my friends, my family. It’s not peaceful in my head.”*

Aissatou, 15, Mali

The prevalence of rape, sexual exploitation and sexual violence against children in conflict is shocking. In some contexts more than 80% of those affected are children. Yet the scale of this issue has not been appreciated by the international community.

*Unspeakable Crimes Against Children* addresses key questions to understanding sexual violence against children in conflict:

- What’s the scale of the problem?
- Who suffers?
- Where does it happen?
- Who are the perpetrators?
- Why does it happen?
- What’s the impact on children?

The report goes on to look at how we can protect children in these situations and identifies gaps in funding.

Finally, the report makes a series of recommendations to G8 countries to tackle these horrific crimes against children.

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