

Regional Emergency



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UNICEF-EAPRO First Regional Planning Meeting Active Youth Participation Highlights Regional Meet

From September 18-21, 2002, United Nation's Children's Fund-East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF-EAPRO) held the first regional planning meeting for the Children Caught in Conflicts Project at the Sasa Nivet International House, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. Seven young people from Indonesia, the Philippines, and along the Thai-Burmese (Myanmar) border, with ages ranging between 15 and 21, joined the adult participants composed of research partners, UNICEF staff, regional UNICEF and thematic partners and invited experts for the three-day meeting. The regional planning meeting, the first stage of the research project, sought to give research partners a basic understanding how armed conflict affects children. It also sought to discuss and define the methodology, particularly to define participation in the context of the project, as well as to plan out the research project and identify the field research tools.

One of the three objectives of the Children Caught in Conflicts Project is the active participation of children and young people in the project, which also aims for the formation of an enhanced knowledge-base relating to children affected by armed conflict in the region. State and non-state actors in the conflict areas in Indonesia, the Philippines, and along the Thai-Burmese (Myanmar) border are known to use children as soldiers. Thousands of children have also been displaced as a result of the armed conflict. The UNICEF-EAPRO-funded project also aims for the identification and definition of

child protection strategies for this specific type of conflict. The involvement and consultation of children and young people in the three-day meet mirror the international community's recognition of the need to engage war-affected children and youth in policy development and programming for their own rehabilitation, (re)integration and education.

Participation of Young People

The youth participants, four boys and three girls who were selected by their peers in sessions previously held in the three countries, arrived in Bangkok a day before the start of the regional planning meeting. They met with a professional youth meeting facilitator to engage in team building activities and to prepare for the meeting with the adult participants. During the regional planning meeting, the young people joined the adult participants for the opening session as well as in the sessions specifically covering the project's four main topics – unaccompanied and separated children, child soldiers, the impact of displacement, and the psychosocial impact of armed conflict. For example, during the thematic session on separated and unaccompanied children, the youth group identified the categories of children, the reasons for their separation, the

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NGO Reaction to UN Sec Council
Debate on Child Soldiers Issue

Translate Words into Action

A coalition of NGO leaders demanded at a January 17 news conference that the United Nations Security Council act against governments and armed groups that use children in conflict. "There is a need to translate words into action," said Katherine Hunt, a member of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. She said that the Security Council had to show interest in implementation and not just on reporting. The coalition urged the Security Council to adopt a strong resolution to set out a "clear path" for the protection of children. The NGO reaction came three days after UN Secretary General Kofi Annan had addressed the Security Council during a debate on Children and Armed Conflict.

The coalition also pressed the international body to expand the list of countries where children are used as soldiers, such as Burma, Colombia, and Sri Lanka. In December, Annan released a report on child soldiers that included a list of violators of child protection laws. The list, which included more than 20 state and non-state actors from Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Somalia, was annexed to the UN Secretary General's report upon request of the Security Council. The report also included other situations of concern with regard to the recruitment and use of child soldiers and conflict situations not in the Security Council agenda, namely those in Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, the Sudan, Uganda, and Sri Lanka.

Some NGOs are lobbying member states to back a resolution calling for an annual progress report on countries where children are used as child soldiers. Such a resolution would be another welcome development in the international campaign against the use of child soldiers. The previous months, during his address to the UN Security Council, Annan said that the UN had made headway in international legal efforts for the protection, rights, and well-being of war-affected children. Annan added that steady progress had been made in embedding the issue of children affected by armed conflict into the UN peace and security agenda. He cited the Security Council's adoption of three resolutions: the integration of child protection in peacekeeping mandates; the deployment of child protection advisers in selected UN peace missions; and the development of child protection training in mission areas. Annan said that the UN General Assembly's adoption of the document entitled "A world fit for children" during the special session on children reflected a revived commitment to protect children during armed conflict. In his report, Annan noted a strengthened normative framework for the protection of children in armed conflict, citing the entry into force in 2002 of

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condition of these children, and the obstacles researchers face in interviewing them. During the other sessions, they worked with the facilitator to discuss program's four topics and to prepare for the plenary discussions. As not all the young people were fluent in English, organizers provided translators throughout the activities.

On the first day of the meeting, the young participants shared their experiences with how armed conflicts have affected children in their respective areas. They revealed the full range of problems associated with warfare, especially low intensity conflicts and abuses associated with counter-insurgency campaigns. The young participants reported on the ways in which they could participate in the study, in the areas of design, data collection, analysis, and reporting and sharing. Prior to the final day's discussion on project design, the young people, speaking of the different levels of comfort and safety and sharing ways to cope with the situation, discussed their process of re-entry into the conflict areas. They also expressed the need to share their experiences from the planning meeting and their evaluation of the three-day event emphasized the opportunity to develop friendships and to learn from other people. Young

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SPECIAL NEWS FEATURE

Datel in Aceh: The Search for the Rule of Law in a Time of Transition

During a visit to war-torn Aceh province in Northwestern Sumatra in mid-December, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri told local officials, religious leaders and legislators that all law violations, including abductions and murders, must be tackled under the Criminal Code. She emphasized the importance of the rule of law as the preliminary requirement for the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed in Geneva on December 9 between Jakarta and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), particularly during the one-month transitional period. She said that both the police and military, while carrying out confidence building measures, must take stringent measures against civilians and armed personnel violating the law and disturbing the peace and order in Aceh. President Sukarnoputri remained optimistic that should there be a universal and genuine commitment to comply with the peace agreement, the conflict in Aceh would be resolved within two years. During her visit to Banda Aceh, she had ordered senior social, security, and economic ministers to institute short- and long-term plans for the restoration of peace and order and social rehabilitation of the province.

Reacting to President Sukarnoputri's remarks, the head of the Indonesian police force said that the law enforcement agency would investigate a total of 26 crimes in accordance with Indonesian law and in conjunction with the Joint Security Council as stipulated in the peace agreement. National Police Chief Da'i Bachtiar described the one-month transition period as a "golden chance" for both Jakarta and the GAM "to heal all injuries caused by hostilities during the conflict." A ranking local police official in Aceh meanwhile warned that failure to bring violators to justice would render the peace accord ineffective and result in the re-eruption of violence in the province. GAM, whose members have also allegedly carried out human rights abuses, called on Jakarta to immediately proceed with human rights trials in Aceh – a measure momentarily opposed by the military, who said that such trials could derail the peace process between the Indonesian government and the GAM. Military Chief Gen. Endriartono Sutarto disagreed with the conduct of the trials, saying that both sides to the Aceh problem were "struggling for confidence building."

A human rights watch group, the Aceh Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence (KontraS Aceh) reported days before the signing of the peace agreement that 1,307 people have been killed, 1,860 tortured and 1,186 others arbitrarily arrested from January to November 2002. In their press statement, KontraS Aceh, which also reported 46 cases of sexual

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NGO Reaction... (continued from page 6)

Annan said in his report that the list clearly demonstrated the "will of the international community that those who violate the standards cannot do so with impunity." The list, he said, represented an important step in efforts to force guilty parties to comply with international child protection obligations. He told the Security Council that the list was the start of a new era of monitoring and reporting on the manner parties treat children during conflict. Annan said that it was essential that the list be "followed by systematic monitoring and reporting on compliance by listed parties, as well as the consideration of targeted measures against those who continue to flout their international obligations." In his remarks to the Security Council, Annan said that the exposure of violators of child protection standards to the light of public scrutiny, "we are serving notice that the international community is finally willing

to back expressions of concern with action." Stressing that more was needed to be done, Annan noted the need for the promotion and dissemination of child protection standards and norms and the need for awareness raising about them on the ground. He also noted the need for strengthened monitoring and reporting mechanisms for the identification and prosecution of violators. At the conclusion of his report, the UN Secretary General stressed that dissemination, advocacy, monitoring and reporting were the "key components that must encompass an 'era of application'".

Hours before the debate, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Carol Bellamy told the Security Council to establish a "culture of accountability" by holding state and non-state actors that use child soldiers accountable and responsible for their actions. UNICEF estimates that about 300,000 children worldwide are used as child soldiers. (MPP) ■

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Methodology and Project Design

The methodological sessions stressed that participatory research should be a "joint-inquiry" of outside researchers and the people, taking on in some instances, a three-pronged approach – a method of social investigation, an educational act, and a means of taking action. The first draft of the regional planning meeting points out that participatory research aims "to understand the conditions underlying a problem, in order to resolve the problem by overcoming these conditions". It identifies participatory research challenges, among them, the need to "get closer to children's realities" and to "make children's voices audible" and their lives visible. To meet this and other challenges, participants noted that one method that has found success in overcoming these challenges is the life-story interview. The adult members of the research teams spent the final day of the planning meeting discussing the design, research questions, methodology, and specific tools to be used throughout the project. A report outline and list of tools were produced at the end of the day. Partners were also designated one or more tools to develop and finalize by the end of 2002.

In closing, the participants discussed how to disseminate the findings of the research. They also raised other issues that required action, among them the identification of areas of capacity building or support by the UNICEF country office and country-level partner. The other issues raised included the provision of a support training of researchers and development of a training guide; the need for a child/youth facilitator in each country; and the clarification of the time frame and end products of the project.

The regional partners for the Children Caught in Conflict Project are the Center for Refugee Studies (CRS) of Canada, Child Workers of Asia (CWA) and Asian Research Center for Migration (ACRM) of Thailand, and Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program (PST) of the Philippines. An organized research unit of York University in Toronto, CRS is engaged in research on refugee issues and other initiatives relating to displaced children. ACRM of the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University has done comprehensive work in the Thai-Burmese border, including studies focusing on women and on HIV/AIDS vulnerability. Child Workers of Asia, a network of 50 groups and organizations working on child labor in 14 countries, is engaged in building the capacity of NGOs to work with child-labor related issues, as well as research, promotion of child participation. PST of the Center for Integrative and Development Studies of the University of the Philippines works in the areas of childhood and child rights, torture prevention and rehabilitation, violence against women, and children in armed conflict within the Philippine context. (MPP) ■

Dateline Aceh... (continued from page 7)

harassed women and 377 disappearances in 2002, charged the military of conducting terror campaigns "to push down the voice" of civil society groups in Aceh. Almost a week before the signing of the peace agreement, six men suspected to be members of the Indonesian military kidnapped and murdered a 26-year old coordinator of a coalition of students and youth groups in the western part of the autonomous province. The Asian Human Rights Commission immediately called upon Indonesian authorities to conduct an impartial investigation on the murder of the young activist - the latest in the appalling long list of human rights violations and abuses in Aceh. The province, located in northwestern Sumatra, has been the scene of an intense and bloody 26-year struggle for independence, and the conflict has resulted in thousands of cases of disappearances, extra-judicial killing, rapes, torture and forced displacement, and other human rights abuses. (MPP) ■

NEWS DISPATCH...

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Trondheim, Norway to launch an IDP research network. The conference aims to initiate a productive international network with info-exchange, debates on IDP research and the development of new research ideas. Researchers and doctoral fellows will present papers on finished and on-going work during the international conference entitled "Researching Internal Displacement: State of the Art," whose aim is to identify the state of the art and to show the diversity of IDP-related research. The Trondheim international conference also seeks to determine the accomplishments of internal displacement studies and to identify the most recent theoretical contributions to the social sciences.

Open to a broad range of approaches, the conference covers various issues of interest, such as the history, origin, development, and usefulness of the concept "Internally Displaced Person," the difference between internal displacement from other forms of forced migration, research on the causes of displacement, local integration and host populations. Papers on policy environment, aid systems, protection, sovereignty and the international dimension of internal displacement will also be discussed during the two-day conference. (MPP/DA) ■

For more information, visit the Global IDP Project website: www.idpproject.org

NEWS DISPATCH

UNICEF-East Asia and Pacific Region Office UNICEF-EAPRO Releases New Report on Child Soldiers

UNICEF-East Asia and Pacific Region Office released at the end of October the results of a new qualitative study on child soldiery in the East Asia and Pacific region. Entitled "Adult Wars, Child Soldiers: Voices of Children Involved in Armed Conflict in the East Asia and the Pacific Region," the study is based on interviews with 69 current and former child soldiers in six countries. During the launch, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy said that recent research has shown that thousands of children are still being recruited, often forcibly, into state and non-state armies in the region. She said that it was time for all parties to recognize the child soldiers issue and to cooperate with UNICEF and other organizations that stand ready to help bring and end to the use of children as soldiers, a problem she described as a "profound abuse of children's rights." Upon observation that up to a quarter of the estimated 300,000 child soldiers worldwide are found in East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF called for new and unified efforts for child demobilization and reintegration. (MPP/DA)

See Typescript for a description and more details about the newly released report.

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers Southeast Asia Regional Coalition Established

More than 10 Southeast Asian organizations formally gathered at the Crystal Inn from October 6 to 9, 2002 in Iligan City, Mindanao, Philippines to establish a regional coalition initially called Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers Steering Committee for Southeast Asia. The new regional coalition forms part of the larger network, The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which was formed in 1998 by leading international organizations, among them Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. The establishment of the Southeast Asian regional coalition comes after the conduct of national consultation workshops in the Philippines, Indonesia and Burma

(Myanmar) in the early part of 2002. Youth delegates, including Philippine and Burmese former child soldiers joined local and Indonesian human rights groups representatives in the meeting.

Participants to the meeting, which was coordinated by Mindanao-based NGO Birth-Dev Inc. along with Child Workers Asia, reported the increasing intensity of conflict across the region and the increasing vulnerability of children to become involved in the conflict. They proposed country-specific plans, which include the building or consolidating national network with strong children's participation, the increase of potential of NGOs and communities to implement coalition work, and developing public and government awareness against the use of child soldiers. Participants also proposed regional-level activities to be carried out for the next two years, among them the selection of a regional coordinator to be initially based in the Philippines, the conduct of capacity-building workshops on advocacy and lobbying, research and psychosocial support for former child soldiers. (MPP/DA)

Consultation-Workshop & Roundtable Seminar with NGOs in the Philippines Philippine NGOs Present Workshop Results to UN IDP Envoy

On November 6, 2002, participants to the Consultation-Workshop & Roundtable Seminar with NGOs in the Philippines held at the Innotech Center in Quezon City, Philippines, presented to United Nations Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Representative Francis Deng the results of the workshop. Some 50 participants to the workshop, facilitated by the Ecumenical Commission for Displaced Families and Communities, discussed the issue of IDPs in the country. In their document presented to the UN envoy, the participants described the efforts by Philippine-based NGOs prior to, during, and after displacement. They identified gaps in the intervention efforts to address the issues of Philippine IDPs and recommended points of action to the UN and the Philippine government. The NGO representatives stressed that enduring solutions must be found to break the "conflict-displacement-conflict" cycle.

Regarding work being undertaken in the pre-displacement period, participants said that Philippine NGOs were providing monitoring, documentation, relief, medical, and rehabilitation services. The workshop report also noted that church groups were also working to cultivate a "culture of peace" in certain conflict-affected areas. On work during displacement,

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NEWS DISPATCH...

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participants said that NGOs were also conducting monitoring activities, documentation, and public awareness campaigns, creating public pressure for the government and appropriate agencies to respond to displacement incidents. They added that NGOs were also engaged in resource generation activities, legal advocacy work, networking with other groups, psychosocial interventions, reunification of family members and other services. NGOs however noted that it was after the displacement that communities needed the most aid but receive the least assistance.

Participants called for UN support for local capacity building initiatives and assistance in information management/networking, particularly in facilitating an exchange of experiences in disaster preparedness in the international community. They underscored the crucial role of the UN in compelling governments to respect and comply with international humanitarian standards and practices, especially during times of conflict. They also pointed out that it was important for the UN to become aware of available programs for returning communities and disseminate positive measures or programs. Participants also stressed the need for the Philippine government to integrate hazard planning programs for both man-made and natural disasters. They called for the inclusion of poverty reduction goals in the disaster preparedness programs, the institutionalization of public participation in decision making. They said the government should police their ranks and prevent blockades during relief operations. Stressing that NGO work should compliment government efforts to address the IDP issue in the Philippines, participants said that the government should remain visible until after the incidence of displacement. (MPP)

Norwegian University of Science & Technology/Norwegian Refugee Council/
 Global IDP Project

Launch of IDP Research Network and International Conference Set for February 2003 in Norway

The Research Group on Forced Migration at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, in cooperation with the Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project will hold an international conference on February 7-8, 2003 in

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NGO Reaction... (continued from page 2)

two landmark international instruments. He referred to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, setting the age limit for compulsory recruitment and direct participation in hostilities at 18; and to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court classifying the conscription, enlistment or use in hostilities of children under 15 as war crimes. He observed that "impressive gains have been made in codifying international norms and standards for the protection and well-being of children."

In his remarks to the Security Council, Annan however lamented the tragic fact that government and rebel armies worldwide continue to forcibly conscript into their ranks - that "children continue to be victimized in the most cynical and cruel manner in conflicts around the world". In both his report and remarks to the Security Council, Annan said that children living in the conflict zones remained at risk from landmines and unexploded ordinance, from abduction, from displacement and deprivation of education and basic health services, from forced labor in the illicit commercial exploitation of natural resources in the conflict areas, and from sexual exploitation and abuse.

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UNICEF-EAPRO... (continued from page 2)

not being adequately protected under international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee laws. Earlier studies pointed towards the inclusion of specific issues relating to child soldiers, namely vulnerability as a result of displacement, psychosocial impact - including gender based violence and sexual exploitation, landmines, small arms, and unaccompanied children. Framers of the study also noted the unclear extent of applicability to the East Asian and Pacific context, of the child protection policies and guidelines developed elsewhere in the world. Thirdly, state and non-state actors in the region remain reluctant to recognize the occurrence of armed conflicts in their countries. This reluctance has resulted in the lack of political-level debate on war-affected children. Most studies, international debates, and discussions focus on high-profile and high intensity international or internal conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. The conflicts in the East Asia and Pacific region are notably geographically localized and of low intensity, often receiving little attention in the international community. Finally, the study identifies the limited capacity of concerned regional organizations to identify key issues and design appropriate programs. This is coupled by the limited knowledge, at both the country and regional levels, regarding the existing capacity of local counterparts and the extent and kind of capacity building measures needed to be undertaken.

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typescript

Annotated bibliographies of recent and not-so-recent publications, studies, reports and other documents on psychosocial trauma, child soldiers, IDPs, and related issues. Please visit www.psychosocialnetwork.org/online_resources.htm. Works featured in this section are available for reference use at the PST Library.

Adult Wars, Child Soldiers

Voices of Children Involved in Armed Conflict In the East Asia and Pacific Region

UNICEF-EAPRO
 October 2002 (Thailand)
 ISBN: 974-685-015-6
 E-mail: eapro@unicef.org



Based on interviews with 69 current and former child soldiers from six countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, the newly released study documents the experiences of children abducted or recruited by non-State entities. Providing stark evidence of child soldiery in Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines, the UNICEF-funded study, gives a qualitative description on the background of children involved with armed groups and the reasons they become child soldiers. The 81-page report relates the experience of child soldiers, their experience as a consequence of being members of an armed group, and their views and thoughts about the future. According to the book's brief introduction, "it is a record of their voices, rather than a search for numbers". The study includes a table detailing the status of ratification of key international treaties in the East Asia and Pacific region. Of particular interest are the pages briefly featuring the lives of individual child soldiers, each of which are complimented by haunting black and yellow renditions of actual photographs of child soldiers.

Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction and explains the methodology used in the study. It also provides a short background on legal standards to stop the use of child soldiers. Chapter 2, entitled "Voices of Child Soldiers," features English translations of the statements of the child soldiers, using as much as possible their original statements. In this chapter, the child soldiers explain the reasons how they became involved with the armed groups, relate their

experience as child soldiers and the means they are coping with their past and holding on for the future. Chapter 3 contains a five-point conclusion as well as recommendations for the stopping of the use of child soldiers. It also includes a guideline for interviews and a sample of the questionnaire used in the study. ■

Facing the Facts, forging the future

International Conference on Children, torture and other forms of violence

Tampere, Finland 11.27-12.02.01
 The World Organization against
 Torture (OMCT) 2001 (France)
 ISBN: 2-88477-016-X
 E-mail: omct@omct.org



The 187-page document is the result of the "International Conference on Children, Torture and other forms of Violence: Facing the Facts, Forging the Future", which was held in Tampere, Finland from November 27 to December 2, 2001 and attended by 183 participants from 73 countries in all regions. The book opens with a transcript of the opening speech of OMCT Director Eric Sottas. It also contains documents formulated during the international conference, including the Tampere Declaration and final recommendations and regional plans of action. The documentation also contains other outcome documents entitled "Interpretation of the notion of torture within the framework of the rights of the child" and "Situations amounting to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against children". Also contained in this chapter are two proposals formulated by the delegates entitled "International implementation of the rights of the child: Proposal for a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Children" and "Proposal for a framework of the UN study on violence against children". The book contains transcripts of the speeches and papers presented during the international conference. ■