

Conflict Protection Scorecard:

A Powerful Tool to Prevent Human Suffering



The *Conflict Protection Scorecard* looks at six protection needs identified as critical to the well-being of women, girls and boys in conflict zones. They are: protection from sexual violence and physical harm, trafficking and prostitution, military recruitment, psychological trauma, family separation and abuses in camp settings.

The *Scorecard* also measures how well the world community is responding to these needs by checking each protection need against a roster of *Response Options* and determining to what degree these solutions are in place. The *Response Options* are a set of successful strategies and programs that have worked in armed conflicts in recent years to lessen existing suffering and prevent abuses against mothers and children.

Of the 40 conflict zones graded, scores ranged from -96 for Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone (where women and children face the most severe risks of brutality and violence) to -27 for Israel (where protection needs are still severe, but less widespread).

What do we mean when we say “protection”? At the most fundamental level, protection activities restore respect for human dignity. The best protection measures prevent violence and abuse from happening in the first place. If this is not possible, they rehabilitate those who have suffered and punish those who commit crimes against humanity.

To protect the tens of millions of mothers and their children facing dangerous and dehumanizing conditions in conflict zones around the world, Save the Children has devised a first-ever *Conflict Protection Scorecard*. Its purpose is to raise awareness of the human suffering during conflicts, change the way the global community thinks about these crises, and – most importantly – improve how it responds to them. The *Scorecard* analyzes 40 of today’s most brutal conflicts and shows where the safety and security of mothers and children are most at risk. The *Scorecard*:

- Calls attention to desperately needed safeguards for women and children during conflict, and
- Provides a new tool so governments and humanitarian organizations can better *plan* to meet those needs, *prepare* themselves with proven solutions, and *protect* mothers and children at the earliest stage possible from the worst excesses of conflict.

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The *Scorecard* gives grades to each conflict zone, telling us how well women’s and children’s protection needs are being addressed and where the unmet needs are greatest. This system provides a powerful, action-oriented tool to help policymakers and humanitarian organizations diagnose the specific vulnerabilities of mothers and children in conflict-prone areas, to implement appropriate community-level protection responses, and then to monitor what is working and what more may be needed.

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Six Critical Protection Needs of *Women and Children in Conflict*

The *Conflict Protection Scorecard* and *Response Options* are built around six critical “protection needs” of women and children during armed conflict. Abuses and suffering in each of these areas are widespread, in all conflicts, and in all regions of the world:

Protection from sexual violence and physical harm

“From Pweto down near the Zambian border right up to Aru on the Sudan/Uganda border, it’s a black hole where no one is safe and where no outsider goes. Women take a risk when they go out to the fields or on a road to a market. Any day they can be stripped naked, humiliated and raped in public. Many, many people no longer sleep at home, though sleeping in the bush is equally unsafe. Every night there is another village attacked, burned and emptied. It could be any group, no one knows, but always they take the women and girls away.” – United Nations official in Democratic Republic of the Congo¹²

Certain dangers of war are well known. Guns and bombs can end a life or tear off a limb at any moment. The rise of house-to-house combat and guerilla tactics in modern warfare makes it more likely now that the victim will be a woman or a child. A mother may get caught in a gun battle on her way to visit relatives. Boys and girls may be shot while they are walking to school. Or they may step on a land mine while helping with household chores or playing outside.

But there are other, less well-known forms of violence in wartime, and these have reached epidemic proportions. Women’s and girls’ bodies become battlegrounds soldiers use when they rape and force pregnancy as a form of ethnic cleansing. Girls are abducted and forced to stay with soldiers as sexual slaves. Families in refugee camps barter women’s and children’s bodies to get desperately needed food and assistance. Boys, because of their strength and small size, are pressed into dangerous work in militias and into exploitative labor. And within the family, mothers, girls and boys are beaten, or become incest victims, when frustration, fear and anger boil over into violence.

Protection from trafficking and prostitution

“My mother died when I was very small and my father worked as a laborer on other people’s farms. At the age of 16, I was lured by my neighbor into a good job. Feeling the pressure and hard times faced by my family and myself, I was very pleased to receive this opportunity. I didn’t realize that my faith would land me into the brothels of Bombay. I spent the hell of my life for one year there. Then I was sold to a brothel in Calcutta. I spent three-and-a-half years there, and it was more bitter than ever. I’m happy that I was rescued, but now I’ve started thinking who will rescue all those Nepalese who are still in the brothels in many parts of India? I’m worried for those sisters and request the stop of such evil practices in the society.”
– Sita, 23-year-old former prostitute from Nepal¹³

“I was eleven when the rebels attacked our town in Liberia. I got separated from my parents and was captured. I stayed with the rebels for four years. Seven men raped me at the same time and I was forced to pick up arms. I have one child of the rebels – I don’t know exactly which one the father is. I escaped and went to Guinea. I had no caretaker and started to work as a ‘hotel girl’ (prostitute). I thank Save the Children protection workers for having identified me and offering me skill training.”
– Florence, 18-year-old girl living in a refugee camp in Guinea¹⁴

Trafficking and prostitution become more commonplace in areas where conflict strips away economic opportunities at the same time that law and order break down. Women are trafficked out of one country and into another – often lured by the promise of legitimate work – then are sold to pimps or brothels and forced into prostitution or sexual slavery. Women who remain home with their families, or who flee to refugee camps, also often find they have no choice but to sell their bodies in order to provide food for their children.



Protection of children from military recruitment

“I’ve seen people’s hands get cut off, a 10-year-old girl raped and then die, and many men and women burned alive. So many times I just cried inside, because I didn’t dare cry out loud.”

– Mariama, 14-year-old girl soldier from Sierra Leone¹⁵

“During the fighting, you don’t have time to think. Only shoot. If a bad person gives an order, you have to follow it. If he says burn the village, you have to burn it. If he says kill a person, you have to do it.” – Aung, boy soldier from Myanmar, abducted from school at age 14 and forced into the army¹⁶

In many conflicts, boys and girls are recruited as fighters, spies and messengers. Many girls are forced to serve as sexual slaves or “wives” for combatants. In some cases children are forcibly kidnapped, in other cases they are pressured into joining armies or guerilla groups in the hopes that it will protect their family or provide an income for their household. Almost without exception, these children are exposed to extreme physical and sexual violence. Abductors may force children to watch their family members be killed – or even force the child to kill a family member or neighbor themselves – in order to sever the child’s ties to the community. The social and psychological effects of this kind of abuse, even if the children survive the fighting, create major obstacles when reintegrating back into society when the conflict ends.



Protection from psychological trauma

“We were living in a small village in Port Loko district when the rebels attacked us in 1998. It was daytime and we tried to run away, but I was unfortunate and was captured. I was holding my 2-year-old baby boy. First they killed him with an axe. I cried out: ‘Where is my baby, oh my baby.’ So they struck me on the head with a machete. There is a deep scar there. After that they ordered me to put my hand on a stick which was on the ground. They chopped and nearly severed my right hand. Then they ran away and left me. My hand hadn’t completely severed so the doctor in the next town cut it off. It’s hard to find someone who will marry you when your hand has been cut off.”

– Adamasay, 16-year-old girl from Sierra Leone¹⁷

During armed conflicts, women face multiple traumas. These may include witnessing atrocities, losing a loved one, being uprooted from home, being tortured or sexually abused, being separated from other family members, and bearing new care-giving burdens. Children may be exposed to the horrors of war despite their parents’ best efforts to shield them, and children are also sensitive to the stress and anxiety of their parents. The psychological toll of living in a conflict zone is compounded when families are forced to flee and must struggle to fend for themselves in an alien environment.

Adolescent boys, in particular, may face strong social pressure to participate in uprisings as the environment becomes more politicized. Even if they are not overtly recruited, the attitudes and actions of their peers can draw young people away from constructive activities and into potentially damaging situations.

The psychological impact of war often has been overlooked in the rush to respond to urgent physical needs. Untreated psychological troubles can build and lead to continued pain and suffering. When large numbers of people in a community have been traumatized by violence, there is increased likelihood that conflict will continue, or will re-emerge at a later date.



Protection from family separation

“When I lived in Palangkaraya, every day I helped my Dad and Mum sell chicken. When I had to run it felt as if my feet weren’t even touching the ground. I followed the other people running, and I wasn’t even thinking about where my parents were. The news that my parents were dead, victims of the violence, came from my aunt who was still in Palangkaraya. It’s true I cried, I wanted to scream but I tried to be firm and I entrusted my fate to Allah. Now I have to find my own food. I was happy when my parents were still here. There was no need to think about how to eat. If I could go to school again and follow through the exams and gain a diploma, that would be great.” – Rosi, 15-year-old street boy from Indonesia¹⁸

In modern conflicts, many civilians are forced to flee their homes with little or no warning. Under such chaotic conditions, family members can become separated. In other cases, children may be sent to live with friends or relatives where they are “safer” during conflict, but have no idea how to locate their families after the fighting has ended. The violence of war also results in dramatic increases in single-parent (usually female) and child-headed households.



Protection of displaced women and children in camp settings

“When ma asked me to go down to the stream to wash plates, a peacekeeper asked me to take my clothes off so that he can take a picture. When I asked him to give me money he told me, no money for children, only biscuit.” – Refugee child in West Africa¹⁹

Although fleeing their homes may remove refugees and internally displaced persons from the scene of the fighting, the negative consequences of this dislocation are profound. Uprooted people often suffer poor health. In camp situations, crowded conditions may lead to epidemics. Frequently, the specific health needs of females, such as reproductive health services and family planning, are not met. If refugee women do not have access to family planning, they are vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies in a high-risk setting where they may not be able to provide for a child’s basic needs. Another important health need for women and girls is counseling for victims of sexual violence.

Ironically, in some cases women may need protection from those who are supposed to be protecting them. There have been cases of “peacekeeping” soldiers raping women and of women being forced to trade sex for food because aid distribution channels were not set up with their protection needs in mind. One international NGO reports that in Sierra Leone, “due to extensive corruption in the camp system and a very serious food deficiency at the household level throughout the region, families are forced to find ways to obtain food. This opens the doors to all kinds of abuses.”²⁰

Lack of educational opportunities is also a major concern for many refugees and internally displaced persons. The need is especially great for adolescents who may have missed out on much of their education due to conflict and displacement. Sadly, adolescents are also one of the most under-served groups. In addition to fostering literacy and preparing young people to earn a livelihood, education is also an important protection tool. Going to school gives children and youths some sense of normalcy and stability and protects them against forced labor, military recruitment and sexual exploitation.

Protecting Women & Children *from the Other Killers During War*

While the wars of today target innocent civilians in alarmingly brutal ways, it is still true that more women and children die from malnutrition, preventable diseases and complications of childbirth during conflict than die as a direct result of fighting.

Conflict destroys sources of food, places of learning and health-care systems. It increases the likelihood that a mother will not receive the nutrition and care she needs during pregnancy, and that both she and her baby might die. It also increases the likelihood that a woman will face an unwanted pregnancy during a time when she would rather devote energy to her own survival and the well-being of her existing children.

This year's *Mothers' Index* demonstrates the dramatic correlation between conflict and the poor health of women and children. Seven of the bottom 10 countries, and more than half (13) of the bottom 20, are in conflict or post-conflict situations.

But it doesn't have to be this way. In some of the most vicious and intractable conflicts in the world, a remarkable program has proven effective. In Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Sudan, "Days of Tranquility" have been negotiated to allow teams of health care workers to go into communities and vaccinate children against measles, polio and other preventable diseases.

Many more lives can be saved if the services offered during Days of Tranquility include a few more low-cost interventions to empower mothers and better protect children. They are:

- Immunizing women against neonatal tetanus, a highly preventable illness that kills more than 300,000 newborns in poor countries each year;
- Treating women and children for malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea, three of the biggest killers in times of war as well as in times of peace;
- Distributing clean delivery kits, including a sterile razor blade, soap and a few other basic items needed to prevent infections of mothers and newborns; and
- Educating women about family planning and providing access to modern contraception, to enable a mother to postpone her next childbirth to a safer time, when both she and her baby have a better chance to survive and thrive.



Key Findings of the Conflict Protection Scorecard

1. The Scorecard finds widespread violations of women's and children's human rights in every conflict zone and every region of the world. Violence and abuse of civilians are commonplace in today's wars – they are not an aberration. In all 40 conflict zones, women and children endure a torturous existence. For example, rape is commonly used as a weapon of war in Indonesia and Burundi. And children are forced into military service in Myanmar and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Too little is known about the rising levels of human suffering in these places, and too little is being done to protect women and children from war-related violence, exploitation and abuse.

2. The Scorecard identifies Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone as five of the worst conflict zones in which to be a woman or child. Women and children in these countries endure terrible suffering as a result of insecurity and (often long-running) armed conflict. An estimated 4 million women and 6 million children under 15 are imperiled by war in these five countries alone. The global response has been inadequate to mitigate widespread human misery.

Afghanistan has endured more than 20 years of civil war as rebel armies and foreign invaders have battled various governments for control of the country.



More than a year after the fall of the Taliban, there is still overwhelming poverty, lack of basic services, as well as insecurity, lawlessness and continued violence throughout much of the country. No other country has more land mines and unexploded ordnance. The psychological damage to women and children has been acute. Women have suffered massive, systematic and unrelenting human rights abuses that permeate every aspect of their lives. Both Taliban and rebel forces sexually assaulted, abducted and forcibly married women during the conflict, targeting them on the basis of both gender and ethnicity. A study of children in Kabul found that most suffered from psychological war trauma – 97 percent had witnessed violence and 65 percent had experienced the death of a close relative. As Afghanistan's new government struggles to rebuild the country and restore order – lacking millions of dollars in international assistance that were promised by wealthy nations and not delivered – the suffering begun in war time continues for much of the population.

War has raged almost continuously in **Angola** for close to 40 years, affecting two generations of mothers and children. UNITA forces have abducted children for military service and other forms of forced labor. Rural women have been forced to work as porters for UNITA military units and kept in conditions of servitude. There is also a documented pattern of rape as an instrument of terror and control.²¹ A sixth of the population has been displaced, including over 1 million children. Because of the extremely harsh conditions faced by displaced families, some children choose to leave their families and live on the streets where there are money-making opportunities like washing cars and begging. On the streets they become vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.²²



Burundi has been torn by a series of severe ethnic conflicts since 1965. An estimated 250,000 people have lost their lives. Approximately 1.2 million have been forced to flee their homes,²³ and some have been living in camps for more than four years, enduring miserable conditions and without any assistance. Women and children have suffered extreme physical and psychological trauma. In late 2002 and early 2003, there was a marked increase in civilian massacres committed by the army, with more than 173 killed in just one incident in Itaba in September 2002. At the same time, rebels have killed civilians through “attacks, ambushes and assassinations of local officials,” while looting homes, stealing livestock, destroying crops and public infrastructure, firing mortar shells into major cities and forcibly recruiting children.²⁴ Both government troops and rebel soldiers terrorize communities by raping women and girls.



In Democratic Republic of the Congo,

grotesque abuses are being committed by all sides in the conflict to subjugate the civilian population. Thousands – perhaps tens of thousands – of women have been subjected to rape, torture and humiliation. And yet the perpetrators are almost never punished. A doctor working in one hospital reports: “We’ve had cases of serious wounds to the women’s genitals and anus. Sometimes after the actual rape, women have been shot in the vagina. Or they are cut with knives.”²⁵



Thousands of children recruited by government forces, pro-government militias and rebel forces are subjected to beatings, ill-treatment and used as cannon fodder. One eyewitness reported seeing children sent into battle without weapons. “They were ordered to make a lot of noise, using sticks on tree trunks and the like. When they succeeded in diverting the attention of the government troops, that is to say when they drew government fire on their unarmed elements, these units ... would be literally allowed to fall like flies.... The experienced troops would then attack the government troops when their attention was diverted.”²⁶

In **Sierra Leone**, combatants have used every means at their disposal to dominate women and children and undermine cultural values that hold communities together. Thousands of girls and women have been raped. There is widespread use of child soldiers and physical mutilation is inflicted as a form of terror. During the 10-year civil war, all sides committed widespread and systematic sexual violence. Women and girls of all ages, ethnic groups and socio-economic classes were subjected to individual rape, gang rape and rape with objects such as weapons, firewood, umbrellas and pestles. Child combatants raped women who were old enough to be their grandmothers. Rebels raped pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. And fathers were forced to watch their daughters being raped. Very few assistance programs have been established for those who have been subjected to sexual violence, so survivors live not only with the severe physical and mental health consequences of abuses, but also with fear of continued attacks.²⁷



3. Even before the outbreak of war in March 2003, Iraq’s women and children were facing very severe risks and unmet protection needs – these risks have now risen. As *State of the World’s Mothers 2003* went to press, there were reports of heightened psychological distress among Iraqi civilians, people fleeing their homes, children separated from parents, boys forced into combat, and increasing numbers of women and children dying due to violence and worsening humanitarian conditions. *Scorecard* research indicates that Iraqi women and children will require protection in all six critical areas. The earlier that protection is provided, the greater the likelihood that we can prevent suffering, injury and death among innocent civilians.

4. Each of the six protection needs was prevalent across the conflicts analyzed. No country or area was immune.

- The use of child soldiers was reported in more than 70 percent of conflict zones studied. Worldwide, an estimated 300,000 children under the age of 18 serve in armed forces and guerilla groups.²⁸
- Separation of children from their parents was reported in more than 70 percent of conflict zones studied. In Sierra Leone, an estimated 4,500 children were abducted during the invasion of the capital, Freetown. Sixty percent of those abducted were girls, most of whom suffered repeated sexual violence.²⁹
- Trafficking of women and girls was reported in 85 percent of the conflict zones. Violence against women and children was reported in over 95 percent of conflict zones. All regions of the world – including East Asia and the Pacific, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central, Eastern Europe (including the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic States) and Latin America and the Caribbean – have documented cases of trafficking.
- Urgent protection needs for refugee and internally displaced persons were reported in 95 percent of conflict zones. These needs include protection from physical violence and gender-based violence in camps, psychosocial support for women and children who have been raped, abducted or suffered other trauma as a result of conflict, and health services that meet the specific needs of women, children and adolescents. It is estimated that 25 percent of refugees and internally



displaced persons are women of reproductive age, and one in five is likely to be pregnant.³⁰

5. *The need for protection from psychological trauma was the most widespread, yet the level of response was not equal to the need.* Indeed, of the 40 conflict zones analyzed, all reported negative psychological impacts on women and children, and nearly two thirds reported extreme or widespread effects. Women and children who experience conflict-related violence often show signs of extreme stress and anxiety, which can cause a host of psychological and physical problems if left untreated. In one of the most war-affected areas of Sri Lanka, research estimates that 92 percent of children have experienced an event that would provoke post-traumatic stress disorder.³¹

Protection from, and treatment for, psychological trauma is one of the greatest needs in all geographic regions. Although this protection need is the most widespread, it does not command a commensurate level of response. For example, the staff of a healing and reconciliation project in a Sri Lankan community estimated that at least 10 percent of the area's children had significant negative psychological effects from the conflict, but less than 1 percent had access to the program.³² Results are likely to be equally bleak in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, where such research has not been done.

A study of women under Taliban rule in Afghanistan found that at least 97 percent of Afghan women suffered from major depression; 86 percent displayed significant anxiety; 42 percent suffered post-traumatic stress disorder, and almost 25 percent "frequently" considered committing suicide.³³

6. *Regardless of the cause, type or location of conflict, protection needs were generally consistent, suggesting that humanitarian agencies can anticipate human rights abuses in times of armed conflict and take concrete measures to be proactive.* For example, the need for psychological protection is one of the highest-ranked needs in all geographic regions. The protection of refugees and internally displaced persons is also a pervasive need in most regions. Prevention of, and treatment for, gender-based violence, is also an important need, which is likely to grow as awareness and culturally sensitive reporting and response options continue to be developed.

7. *Trafficking is a regional phenomenon, concentrated in East Asia and Pacific region and in Central and Eastern Europe.* It is also common in South Asia, and exists to a lesser degree in other regions. For example:

- During the unrest in East Timor following the 1999 referendum, women were systematically raped by the Indonesian military, sometimes in front of family members. Many were forced into West Timor to serve as sex slaves. Women who were known or suspected to be part of the resistance movement were specifically targeted for this sort of gender-based violence.³⁴
- Kosovar women confronted discrimination and a steep rise in domestic violence, rape, trafficking and abductions following the war.³⁵
- Likewise, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, traffickers continue to abuse and exploit women from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe with impunity. In 1999, Human Rights Watch uncovered brothels scattered throughout Bosnia filled with women trafficked from Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Belarus and Romania.³⁶

8. *The world community has demonstrated a humane and compassionate response to the profound human suffering engendered by war and conflict. Of the 40 conflicts analyzed, 90 percent have involved humanitarian relief efforts; however protection needs have not been adequately addressed.* On a global level, response efforts have addressed a broad range of human needs. However, much of this response focuses on physical survival and immediate treatment for the worst ravages of armed conflict in settings where little distinction is made between soldier and civilian. Governments and humanitarian agencies have not made sufficient funding available to address the growing protection needs of women and children in today's especially brutal armed conflicts.

9. *While the wars of today harm innocent civilians in alarming ways, more women and children die from malnutrition, preventable diseases and complications of childbirth during conflict than die as a direct result of fighting.* The *Mothers' Index* helps document the poor nutrition and health status of mothers and children in war-affected areas. Countries in conflict dominate the lower rankings of the *Index*. There are 7 conflict countries in the bottom 10, and 13 in the bottom 20.