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Children and War

What Happens When Child Soldiers Grow-up?

Yemeni and the Life Outcome Study

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Children and Armed Conflict

- Armed conflict profoundly affects the lives of million of children
- 2 million children under 18 years of age killed
- 6 million disabled
- 70% of world's internally displaced and refugees live in the poorest countries in Africa and Asia
- While child mortality is dropping globally—13 of the 20 “worst countries” are affected by or emerging from conflict
- 35% of the global 25 million out of school children live in low income countries affected by conflict

Child Soldiers

- 300,000 children under the age of 18 serve in government forces or armed rebel groups.
- Child soldiers serve as porters or cooks, guards, messengers or spies. Many are pressed into combat and serve on the front lines. Some are used for suicide missions; others, mostly girls, are used as sexual slaves.
- Guerrilla unit commander: “Sometimes it takes a little longer, but eventually children become the most effective combatants of all.”

Conflict—And Policy Actions

- Security Council Resolutions
- Paris Peace Agreement
- DDR Programs

- Note: covered in readings



Longitudinal Study of Former Child Soldiers in Mozambique

- Study conducted over 16 years (1988 – 2005)
- Focus: 40 Former Child Soldiers who received organized assistance
- Information was collected in 1988—when boys were 8-16—through 2005 when they were 24-32 yrs old
- This summer (2011) we will undertake a 20 year follow-up

Focused on Three Outcomes

- Psychological Well Being: PTSD; Adaptation
- Economic Status: Housing; Off-farm Income
- Social Functioning: Spouses; parents; neighbors

Methodology

Quantitative

- Trauma Symptoms Checklist
- Social Functioning Survey
- Economic Status Indicators

Qualitative

- Free Listing
- Focus groups for families, community members, and community leaders

*Limitations: Small sample—males only;
Comparison with local norms, not
comparison group*

War Overview



Child Soldiers Fighting for Renamo

- Mozambique's armed conflict lasted almost 30 years
- In 1975, Frelimo (the Mozambique Liberation Front) was victorious in their independence struggle.
- The minority regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia trained and armed anti-Frelimo groups and disgruntled ex-Frelimo soldiers into the rebel group Renamo.
- Majority of Mozambicans described the conflict not in political or economic terms, but as a “war of the spirits.”

Mozambican War Had a Devastating Impact on Children

- 1/3 of Mozambique's children died before they reached age 5
- Mozambique's high rates of infant & child mortality were linked to the conflict.
- Increased deaths by starvation, malnutrition & preventable illness.
- What happened to Mozambican children who survived beyond the age of five?



Nationwide Survey 1989

- Interviews of 504 Children Throughout Mozambique – in 49 war-affected districts comprising seven of Mozambique's ten provinces
- Broad geographical area from Maputo in the South to Nampula in the North
- Random sample of 227 boys & 227 girls between the ages of 6 and 15 years of age to describe their war-related experiences in detail



Results

- **77% had Witnessed Murder, often in large numbers**
- **88% had Witnessed Physical Abuse and/or Torture**
- **51% had Witnessed Rape and/or Sexual Abuse**
- **64% had been Abducted from their Families**
- **75% of the Children were Forced to serve as Porters or Human Cargo Carriers**
- **28% of the children were Trained for Combat.**

Socialization into Violence

- Renamo used violence to undermine personal integrity and destroy children's loyalty to their families and communities.
- Children were encouraged to abuse others.
- Children who did not follow orders were killed.

40 Boys

- All 40 boys had been abducted from their families by Renamo, taken to base camps, trained as combatants, and in many cases forced to kill other human beings.
- The Mozambican government placed these boys in the Lhanguene Center in Maputo (1988-89)
- All were reunited with family members and returned to rural villages outside district towns in 3 southern provinces.

Returning Home

Psychosocial Stress Over Time

Question	Former Child Soldiers: Sometimes or Frequently	
	Lhanguene 1988	Home Villages 2003
Recurrent thoughts or memories of the most hurtful or traumatic events	40/40	40/40
Feeling as though the traumatic event(s) is happening again	24/40	18/40
Recurrent Nightmares	21/40	15/40

Returning Home, Cont.

Psychosocial Stress Over Time

Question	Former Child Soldiers: Sometimes or Frequently	
Sudden emotional or physical reaction when reminded of the most hurtful or traumatic moments	19/40	14/40
Inability to remember parts of the most hurtful or traumatic events	25/40	18/40
Avoid activities that remind you of the most hurtful or traumatic events.	14/40	26/40

Managing Post-Traumatic Stress

Frequency and Severity Reduced by:

1. Avoidance of physical and social activities.
2. Avoidance of certain chores i.e. hunting, farming with a hoe or clearing land with a machete.
3. Conscious efforts to not dwell on troubling thoughts and feelings.



Family and Community Acceptance

- All of the boys were reunited with their relatives
- Initial reunifications revealed overt joy and excitement, as well as tears and sorrow for time apart.
- Follow up visits 1988, 1989, 1990 found that all the Lhanguene boys continued to be well received with two exceptions

Majority reported they were received by their communities without discrimination during follow-up visits:

- 2004— Follow up research employed a feeling of acceptance scale

Former child soldiers overwhelming reported that they continue to be well received by members of their communities –

Spouses and Livelihoods

- **91.7% - Own homes: matches national norm**
- **100% - are engaged in farming**
- **63% - Earn additional income from wage labor endeavors. Above the national average of 38%**
- **80% of former child soldiers are married**
- **Majority of spouses report that they are “good husbands”**

Fathers

Health Indicators of Lhanguene Boy's Children

- **60% - Reported their children in good health**
- **All scored above the median using the WHO/NCHS normalized reference height for weight scale**
- **75% - of school-aged daughters and sons attended primary school. 52% is the national average**





Summary of Findings

- Journalists labeled Mozambique's Children – “The Lost Generation” & “Future Barbarians”
- **Our research found this not to be true**
- Off farming income earners above national norm
- Perceived by their spouses to be “good husbands”
- Taking active steps to ensure their own children's welfare: health, nutrition and educational status above norms
- Perceived as “good neighbors” by their communities
- Continue to experience psychological distress linked to child-soldiering experiences. Some manage this distress better than others

Discussion

- Recovery: active quests to derive meaning from past events, to be “cleansed”, “forgiven”, regain “true” identity by “being like everyone else”—approach as a mystery not just as problem identification
- Chronic and severe trauma: time/identity thresholds
- Healing and reconciliation as a collective act: community acceptance and forgiveness are key
- Assistance Linked to Normative Life Cycle: litmus test for organized assistance
- Livelihoods and Poverty: normative challenge—like everyone else!