



Columbia University  
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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 its 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 Indictors

## 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

<b>Question</b>	<b>Former Child Soldiers: Sometimes or Frequently</b>	
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 overwhelmingly 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!