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Children's Security in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

Discussion Paper

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for Children and Armed Conflict

David Nosworthy

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Purpose and Structure of this Paper	2
I. Background.....	3
II. Why Children's Security Matters.....	5
A. Child Rights and Preventing Wrongs.....	6
B. Protecting Social Capital.....	7
C. Demographics.....	9
III. Governance and the Security Sector.....	10
Defining the Security Sector	11
Security Governance and Post-conflict Peacebuilding.....	12
Addressing the Legacies of War.....	13
IV. Conclusion	15

Discussion Paper:

Children's Security in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

David Nosworthy*

Introduction

Echoing the notion of human security, a central theme of the original report on the "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" by the expert of the UN Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Machel, was the peace and security agenda. While the human security concept was still in the early days of conceptual formulation at the time of the reports publication in 1996, the indication was that an approach that placed the individual at the centre of security planning would directly benefit children and compliment the bold protection agenda that the report had set for the international community.

However, ten years later, while progress has been made in bringing gender to the attention of security policy-makers and practitioners, children remain largely invisible from security discussion and debate. The one group who do elicit attention are child soldiers – but, while they have often experienced the atrocities of war first-hand, they represent only a small percentage of the overall number of children whose lives have been impacted by armed conflict and who are striving with their families and communities to recover from war's grave effects.

The emergence of the human security concept in particular has enabled a refocusing of the security debate to encompass not only state security but also the obligation to provide for the security of each and every individual. While there is debate about the 'reach' of human security, what has been recognised is the link between security, development and human rights, which should logically include the protection of children's rights. In conflict and post-conflict situations the need to recognise these linkages is at its most acute. Guaranteeing the security of civilians in these situations is paramount, and negotiating the tricky transition to a durable and sustainable peace a complex but vital step. Recognising the propensity for situations to degenerate and return to conflict, there has been a mobilisation on the part of the international community to invest in peacebuilding activities. A key peacebuilding issue that has come to receive special attention is security sector reform, and recognition of its importance in helping fragile states in a transition to peace, stability and development.

While seeking to shape the security sector agenda to be more inclusive of children it is important to avoid the risk of 'securitising' children, and young people in general. What this paper argues is that better recognition and therefore increased focus on the specific security issues affecting children can best be achieved through strengthening, rather than altering, the existing security governance framework in particular through reinforcing the human rights perspective of security.

Children tend to be characterised in political and even development circles as either vulnerable, helpless victims of circumstance, or delinquent troublemakers who pose a threat to security. Neither perspective is representative of the vast majority of children, or helpful to better understanding children's own security needs and concerns. Restricting one's perspective on children risks undermining their own ability to contribute to their healthy development, and ignores the fact that they share a set of universal human rights with all other persons as well as certain additional rights that recognise their dependence, development, and protection needs.

What is certain is that considering them as victims undervalues their potential to be active agents with something to contribute, and casting them as offenders or perpetrators misses the point that many of these children and young people are themselves coming from backgrounds associated with abuse and neglect, making them vulnerable to selecting negative coping strategies (such as drugs, violence, crime) that result in negative security outcomes.

The Purpose and Structure of this Paper

This paper aims to link child protection imperatives to security sector reform activities in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.

The importance of applying a security governance approach to the post-conflict peacebuilding agenda is presented and, with child protection considerations at the fore, a framework for operationalising the approach is introduced. Specific elements of the post-conflict peacebuilding process, including DDR, rule of law and SSR, are then considered focussing on their relevance to child protection issues.

An underlying theme of the paper is that existing human rights obligations on the part of states provide an effective framework of standards for delivering human security, and establish the security sector as key duty-bearers in assuring security to all, including children. The special protection that children are entitled to under international human rights law will be explored along with the obligations that this places on security sector actors to protect the rights of individuals and also to respect those rights themselves.

Discussion around children is too often polarised between them being helpless victims, or simply demons; neither of which is helpful to understanding their protection and development needs. The notion of 'youth' will also be introduced as children's experiences tend to directly impact on the decisions that make during the critical transition to adulthood.

Finally, the paper concludes by summarising some of the key discussion points and highlighting the need to strengthen the human rights perspective of security sector governance in order to better promote the security component of child protection.

This discussion paper explores areas where the child protection and peacebuilding agendas come together, drawing on DCAF Policy Paper No. 11: Shaping a Security Governance Agenda in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding (2005).¹

I. Background

The end of the Cold War introduced a new global security environment, marked by intra-state conflicts and mounting threats to individuals. It also, however, created 'the political space for traditional peacekeeping operations to extend their mandates to a wide range of peacebuilding activities'.² Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali introduced the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding in his 1992 paper, *An Agenda for Peace*, as 'action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid relapse to conflict'.³ In 2001, the UN Security Council reiterated this broader view of peacebuilding as reflective of all stages of conflict. The Security Council affirmed that peacebuilding 'aimed at preventing the outbreak, the recurrence or continuation of armed conflict'.⁴

In 1994, Boutros Boutros-Ghali named Graça Machel, who served as Mozambique's first post-independence Minister for Education, the Expert in charge of producing a ground-breaking report on the impact of armed conflict on children. The report was ground-breaking in bringing attention to the role that the international community has to play in supporting post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. The study also called for the appointment of a UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, with Olara A. Otunnu taking up the post in 1996.

The United Nations Security Council has acknowledged that protecting child rights and preventing child rights violations are integral to peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict environments. Since 1999, the Security Council has made children a priority, discussing the issue on an annual basis, and leading to Resolution 1612 (2005) that called for the implementation of a

monitoring and reporting mechanism – the first time such an initiative has been taken by the Council. While the focus of their deliberation has been the recruitment or use of children by armed forces or groups, their concern is also with a number of other 'grave violations', namely: killing or maiming of children; attacks against schools or hospitals; abduction; rape or other grave sexual violence against children; and denial of humanitarian access for children. Members of both armed forces and armed groups appear in early reports as perpetrators of abuses against children, highlighting the importance of engaging these same actors in safe-guarding the security of children. Not only are these security actors the key players in protecting the rights and physical well-being of children, they are also key to preventing some of the gravest violations against children.

In parallel to developments prioritising children's security, the Security Council has begun to discuss security sector reform, holding a debate on the issue in February 2007. Although the child's right to security did not feature directly in the debate, interventions included reference to the importance of focussing on the security of the individual, including those with special protection needs. Mr. Skinner-Klee, representative of Guatemala to the Security Council, emphasised that the security sector "should be human-centred, broad, inclusive, long-term and implemented case by case", and stated that "the component of prevention must be included to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to preventing violence and criminality".⁵

Statement by the President of the Security Council, following the debate on Security Sector Reform⁶

The Security Council requests the Peacebuilding Commission to include consideration of security sector reform programmes in designing integrated peacebuilding strategies for its continued engagement with those countries, with a view to developing best practices regarding comprehensive, coherent, and nationally-owned security sector reform programmes.

The Security Council recognizes the interlinkages between security sector reform and other important factors of stabilization and reconstruction, such as transitional justice disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation of former combatants, small arms and light weapons control, as well as gender equality, children and armed conflict and human rights issues.

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, the UN Peacebuilding Commission views peacebuilding as a means of undertaking and coordinating 'post-conflict recovery'.⁷ Composed of

31 member countries, the objectives of the Peacebuilding Commission consist of proposing integrated peacebuilding strategies, ensuring long-term financing, focusing the international community's on post-conflict recovery and developing best practices.⁸ The Peacebuilding Commission has been seen by some as an opportunity to 'institutionalise peacebuilding at the highest levels'.⁹ An advisory subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and Security Council, it provides advice on peacebuilding activities. Thus far, the Commission has carried out extensive country-specific meetings and reports on Sierra Leone and Burundi and identified priorities for the international community's involvement in post-conflict recovery in those states.¹⁰

Another important development at the international level has been the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to seek justice for crimes committed during conflict. The ICC is the first ever permanent, treaty based, international criminal court. Its jurisdiction is limited to the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The first person to be arrested and transferred to the ICC in March 2006, was Thomas Lubanga, the leader of a militia group in the Democratic Republic of Congo, accused of war crimes relating to conscripting and enlisting children under the age of fifteen and using them to participate actively in hostilities. The first arrest warrants were issued in July 2005 against five members of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. Their leader, Joseph Kony, is accused of 33 counts of individual criminal responsibility including the forced enlisting of children.¹¹

II. Why Children's Security Matters

There are a number of imperatives and obligations that make children a group of special importance to the security sector. And, while a more effective and functional security sector obviously provides direct benefits to the population as a whole, there are specific and special protection issues associated with children that need to be recognised and integrated into reform processes and policy developments. A number of these imperatives are set out in the state's obligations under international human rights law, which establish children as a group of particular importance to the security sector.

It must also be recognised that children are increasingly the victims of armed conflict. UNICEF report that in recent decades, about half of the casualties in armed conflicts are children. An estimated 20 million have been forced to flee their homes and are living as refugees or are internally displaced. More than 2 million have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade and more than three times that number, at least 6 million children, have been permanently disabled or seriously injured.¹²

Fragile states in general impact heavily on children. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) observed that nearly half of all children who die before the age of five are born in fragile states. In addition, child mortality was found to be almost two-and-a-half times higher than in other poor countries and maternal mortality more than two-and-a-half times greater.¹³

A. Child Rights and Preventing Wrongs

International Human Rights Law addresses the protection of individuals against violations by governments of their fundamental rights and freedoms. The state is responsible for guaranteeing these human rights for each and every person, and is required to make provision for their realisation, in particular in relation to:

1. respecting the rights of individuals i.e. ensuring that 'wrongs' are not committed against them, and;
2. protecting individuals from violations of their rights by others.

All state institutions share responsibility for implementing these obligations, with the states security apparatus obviously being a key duty-bearer. Effective application of human rights principles requires awareness and understanding on the part of government institutions and related bodies meaning officials and staff at all levels.

While parents, families and communities are responsible for ensuring the immediate well-being of children, the state in the form of its national and local authorities are responsible for ensuring that children's rights are respected. Ensuring a co-ordinated response at these different levels requires that child and youth perspectives are integrated into security policy and decision making. In practical terms, where this process needs to be at its most efficient is at the level of local authorities and communities, but long-term success will be dependent on commitment and support from central government.

Of the seven international human rights treaties the most widely ratified is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC), giving it almost universal application (only Somalia and the USA have not ratified). The CRC is a comprehensive code of rights for children, offering the highest standards of protection and assistance for children under any international instrument. The protection standards go beyond the usual guarantees of health, education and

welfare, and include guarantees relating to civil and political rights including freedom of expression, religion, association, assembly and privacy.

The special protection that the CRC offers applies to all children within a country's jurisdiction "without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status". As such, the principle of non-discrimination must be applied to aliens, refugees and displaced children, but equally to children who may be in the state illegally.

In addition to listening to children's broader opinions and concerns regarding security, the right to 'be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child' is specifically referenced in Article 12.2 of the CRC. It should also be noted though, that in the exercise of their rights, children have the same obligations as adults do to obey the law, to respect the rights and reputations of others, and not to jeopardise national security, public order, public health and morals.

However, it must also be said that the supposed defenders of human rights and child rights at times become the perpetrators. The security forces themselves are too often responsible for committing violations of international human rights law, often acting with impunity, and beyond the reach of any control or oversight. Such violations have been well documented across the world but, to name just a few, include extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, unlawful and secret detentions, torture, rape, theft and extortion. The use of excessive force by officers of the law leading to unlawful killing is the subject of UN Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. In addition, the use of force, along with other responsibilities, is referred to in the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and states that they "shall respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons".

B. Protecting Social Capital

The wide-spread adoption of notions of societal security and human security mean communities and individuals respectively are the objects of security, in contrast to the traditional state-centred perspective. 'Human security' is concerned with a wide range of threats to individuals from anti-personnel landmines, small arms and light weapons, to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, recruitment of children and their use in armed conflict, and in its broader sense to promoting human development including economic, food, health and environmental security'.

Increasing attention has been paid to the threat that fragile states pose to security and in particular into trying to identify the characteristics that make them fragile. Not only do they present a risk to their own citizens, but they represent a potential threat to their neighbours and even regional stability. One of their defining features is that they tend to be performing least well in achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The UK's Department for International Development (DfID) has compared performance indicators between so-called fragile states and other low-income and middle-income states and based on each of the criteria fragile states can be seen to be lagging behind commitments, see table below.

Table 1:

Progress on MDGs in fragile states compared with other poor countries (2000)

Millennium Development Goal (MDGs)		Low-income fragile states	Other low- and middle-income states
Population		871m	4,361m
MDG 1	Number living on less than \$1 a day	343m	821m
	Proportion of undernourished (mean 1999-2001)	33%	15%
MDG 2	Primary education enrolment	70%	86%
MDG 3	Primary education female:male enrolment ratio	0.84	0.92
MDG 4	Child mortality rate per 1,000 (2002)	138	56
MDG 5	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000	734	270
MDG 6	Number of people living with HIV/AIDS (2001)	17.1m	21.4m
	Malaria death rate per 100,000	90	7
MDG 7	Proportion of population without access to safe water	38%	18%
MDG 8	Telephone and cellphone subscriptions per 100 people	4.5	8.8

Source: DfID (2005). Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states.¹⁴

In their report, “Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states”, DFID links human development and security highlighting that “the most important function of the state for poverty reduction are territorial control, safety and security, capacity to manage public resources, delivery of basic services, and the ability to protect and support the ways in which the poorest people sustain themselves”.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, fragile states tend to be failing on a range of human development indicators that impact heavily on children. The poor performance of fragile states towards achieving the MDGs, a number of which relate directly to children, becomes another indicator of the inability or unwillingness of the state and/or its institutions to provide basic protection to its citizens.

C. Demographics

A high proportion of young people in the population is a characteristic of developing countries. However, data shows that development brings a reduction in fertility rates, improved health resulting in reduced mortality rates, and longer life expectancy. The combined effect is to reduce the proportion that children and youth constitute of the overall population.

This results in significant variations, between industrialised countries where the percentage of children in the population is as low as 25 percent, to developing countries where as much as 50 percent of the population are under the age of 18 years. In a number of refugee and internally displaced populations, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of the population under the age of 18 can increase to over 60%.

If the sheer mass of a youth cohort were enough to trigger violence, then some of these refugee and internally displaced situations around the world would be entirely impossible to manage. It should also be remembered that not all developing countries, even with the same demographic profiles, descend into conflict, indicating that violence and conflict scenarios require a far more complex set of social and political conditions to come together before they can be played out. Development appears to support, even encourage, positive decision-making options and in the process reduces the opportunities for spoilers to profit.

Youth Bulge Theory in Perspective

Mirroring the rhetoric that casts children and young people as 'the problem', there has been an increasing amount of discussion around the so-called Youth Bulge Theory. In a box entitled "Do large youth cohorts cause violence? Maybe if economic growth rates are low", the World Bank's, World Development Report (2007)¹⁵ considers the risk that youth pose, and is only tempered by reference to Urdal's (2004) observation that, "It seems that a large youth cohort can aggravate tensions caused by growth but does not by itself lead to conflict".

In launching the report in September 2006, François Bourguignon, the World Bank's Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics focussed on stressing the positive contribution that youth can make, adding "*But, these young people must be well-prepared in order to create and find good jobs*". The conclusion drawn from the report is that developing countries which invest in better education, healthcare, and job training could produce surging economic growth and sharply reduced poverty.

III. Governance and the Security Sector

The increase of civil conflicts and failed states in the post-Cold War era has led to a growing recognition that individuals and non-state groups can, and should, be seen as objects of security. In such circumstances the conventional security discourse, focused on state-controlled security institutions as the mechanisms through which the state was to be secured, no longer seems quite adequate.

At the same time, the notion of 'governance' has also gained widespread currency. The working definition of 'governance' adopted by the World Governance Survey project is that, "Governance refers to the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions"¹⁶.

In states where central government has all but collapsed, or lost its legitimacy, a range of non-state actors (private or international, and possibly armed) assume roles or degrees of authority to fill the void. The notion of 'governance' becomes particularly relevant in such situations to

expressing the challenge of policy-making and coordination where political authority is fragmented among public and private actors on multiple levels of interaction.

Security governance refers to the organisation and management of the security sector, understood here to comprise all the bodies (ranging from armed forces, police and intelligence agencies to those institutions that formulate, implement, and oversee security policy) whose main responsibilities are the protection of the state and its constituent communities.

Defining the Security Sector

A broad definition of a country's security community goes beyond the traditional concept of considering only armed forces and their oversight bodies to include a much more diverse range of actors:

- **Organisations authorised to use force:** armed forces, police, paramilitary forces, gendarmeries, intelligence services (military and civilian), secret services, coast guards, border guards, customs authorities, reserve and local security units (civil defence forces, national guards, presidential guards, militias).
- **Civil management and oversight bodies:** president and prime minister, national security advisory bodies, legislature and legislative select committees, ministries of defence, internal affairs and foreign affairs, customary and traditional authorities, financial management bodies (finance ministries, budget offices, financial audit and planning units), civil society organisations (civilian review boards, public complaints commissions).
- **Justice and law enforcement institutions:** judiciary, justice ministries, prisons, criminal investigation and prosecution services, human rights commissions and ombudspersons, correctional services, customary and traditional justice systems.
- **Non-statutory security forces:** liberation armies, guerrilla armies, private bodyguard units, private security companies, political party militias.
- **Non-statutory civil society groups:** professional groups, the media, research organisations, advocacy organisations, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations, community groups.

The above categorisation¹⁷ includes 'Non-statutory civil society groups', who have a key role to play in safe-guarding children's security and safety. Not only are they closest to the issues of concern affecting the community and children in particular, they are often themselves service providers within the community, and have a vital role to play in monitoring and reporting abuses

affecting the population. The OECD-DAC Guidelines and Reference Series: Security System Reform and Governance (2005)¹⁸, and more recently the OECD-DAC Handbook on Security System Reform (2007)¹⁹, which probably represent the state-of-the-art thinking in terms of the security reform process, focus on security providers and as such propose a security sector covering the first four categories.

Both the guidelines and the handbook stress the important role that civil society has to play in establishing local ownership of any reform process, not only in designing and implementing reform, but in its oversight as well. As the handbook observes in relation to police reform, "*It is important to engage civil society organisations, women's organisations, youth groups and the media from the start as partners in change*" and, in lessons learned, "*By making the community the entry point, beneficiary and driver of the project, genuine ownership and commitment to agreed "community safety plans" were ensured from the beginning*".

Open discussion on child rights and children's security should involve a range of actors with key roles to play as interlocutors with security providers including local authorities, state agencies, professional associations, children's rights groups and other relevant civil society bodies including children's forums²⁰.

Security Governance and Post-conflict Peacebuilding

Issues of security governance are particularly applicable to post-conflict peacebuilding situations precisely because of the absence, or weakness, of central political authority, and the consequent multiplicity of actors with a stake in the provision of security.

Post-conflict states typically confront a complex array of security challenges, many of which stem directly from the state's loss of control over the legitimate use of force. While restoring this monopoly (and simultaneously limiting it through mechanisms of democratic control and accountability) represents one of the fundamental longer-term challenges of any peacebuilding process, in the medium-term, post-conflict contexts are marked by a wide range of different security actors, not all of whom share similar goals or objectives. These actors may include international military and police elements, state-level military, paramilitary and police forces (more or less politicised or criminalised by the conflict), as well as non-state armed actors such as rebel groups (more or less reconciled to the content of any peace agreement), organised criminal formations and armed elements loyal to local warlords. A broad range of actors with a stake in security governance issues, including international organisations and transnational private actors, regional actors (including neighbouring states and regional organisations), and domestic

civil society groups are also present. In this sense, all territorial levels of interaction are involved in post-conflict security governance, from the local to the substate, state, regional, and global levels. Post-conflict peacebuilding thus occurs 'beyond, above and below' the state level²¹, that is to say, transnationally, nationally and locally.

Since no one set of security actors enjoys unchallenged authority to establish and implement a comprehensive security agenda, the security governance challenge necessarily implies a highly political process of coordinating, managing and sequencing a multiplicity of security actors in ways that remove or respond to direct threats to human and state security while building up domestic capacity to deal with them over the longer term. During this highly politicised post-conflict debate, children's views, concerns and aspirations are seldom heard or taken into account in setting policy. Children, including adolescents, are generally deprived of political rights in that they cannot vote, have little opportunity to participate in political process, and as such are largely invisible to political decision-makers. However, they and the issues that they face are likely to be key determinants in achieving a stable and sustainable peace.

For children and youth, the issues and concerns affecting them are most clearly manifested at the local and community level. Civil society and local authorities will be the prime actors in recognising and responding to their protection needs. The notion of 'local ownership', central to security sector governance, means encouraging pro-active engagement and dialogue, including with youth, in the identification and resolution of local security problems. Such a process is also likely to result in young people sensing a more meaningful role for themselves within community life as a whole. This engagement in local security agendas between young people, civil society and the local authorities can subsequently be directed and used in informing and influencing national security agendas in a meaningful way.

Addressing the Legacies of War

The recognition of an expanded security agenda over the past decade has meant that not only is it necessary to manage a wide range of security actors at multiple levels in post-conflict contexts, but that there are an equally broad range of security 'realms' to be addressed. The security challenges that generally confront post-conflict societies include: the need to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate large numbers of former combatants, including child soldiers; to curb and remove remnants of war such as SALW, landmines and unexploded ordnance; to carry out sweeping reforms in the security sector in order to establish effective security forces and governance mechanisms; to disband non-statutory armed forces, or to integrate them into new statutory ones; to establish the rule of law including under transitional administration; to redress past

crimes and atrocities with some urgency, and to promote reconciliation. A number of these 'realms' are associated with specific actions on the part of security sector actors that require special attention to, and consideration of, children.

In general though, security discourse has not linked children's specific requirements to the elements and actions required of the post-conflict peacebuilding process. However, if we consider the security governance imperatives of the process, and its three over-arching themes, the link between children and their special protection does indeed become apparent and therefore an issue of importance and concern for security sector governance.

1. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

When talking about children and DDR, a distinction needs to be drawn between the very different approach that is required to redress a rights violation in the case of children, and the regular DDR programmes for adults, which form part of the formal peacemaking process. According to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)²², it is important to distinguish the special requirements of child DDR as an attempt to prevent or redress a violation of children's human rights. Child DDR requires that the demobilisation (or 'release') of children, especially girls, be actively carried out at all times and that action to prevent child recruitment should be continuous.

2. Rule of Law and Transitional Justice

The rapid reform of national justice mechanisms will be vital to ensuring that accountability is brought to bear for war crimes and human rights violations. Having former combatants who have committed war crimes and/or sexual violence against women and children being released back into their community for 'reintegration' seriously affects community perceptions of safety, and undermines the legitimacy of the justice system. International mechanisms may also have an important role to play.

Specifically related to children, justice reform must include the need to have juvenile justice systems in place and functioning properly. The main goal of the juvenile justice system will be rehabilitation rather than punishment.

3. Security Sector Reform and Governance

Police reform projects should emphasize police/community relations, community policing, human rights, mediation and conflict resolution skills and criminal investigations techniques that

respect human rights but are also effective in solving crimes. Community-based policing represents an organisational strategy allowing the police and community to work together to solve problems of crime, disorder and safety.

Professionalising the police and military will mean incorporating robust human rights training into curricula focused on the role and responsibility that they have as duty-bearers in the protection of individuals, in particular those with special protection needs.

The monitoring of the security sectors performance in relation to child rights implementation should form an integral part of workings of oversight bodies, including parliamentary committees, ombudsman offices, and human rights commissions. Again, empowering non-statutory civil actors, such as the media, NGOs, research institutions and community groups, will reinforce security governance capacities for monitoring and advocacy on behalf of children.

IV. Conclusion

The original report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children identified the peace and security agenda as central to promoting the protection of children affected by armed conflict. In the intervening ten years, the security debate has advanced considerably, but despite the sector having a crucial role to play in protecting their human rights, children's security needs have remained largely invisible in the discussion.

By signing and ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States have taken on a commitment to implement the standards laid out in its various articles. One of the stated principles is that children are given just consideration in all matters concerning them. A core indicator of 'good governance' therefore becomes the extent to which children and their needs are integrated into multi-sector decision-making, at all levels. However, in post-conflict environments the state may have lost authority, or had its credibility seriously called into question, leaving a range of non-state actors to provide for children's security and protection.

As the security governance discussion has demonstrated, the developing discourse has established both individual and non-state actors as objects of security. While this doesn't establish obligations for them under international law, it could be argued that they should at minimum be guided by the principles that the international treaties represent. Using these standards in this way could provide a useful framework for dialogue and engaging security sector governance institutions. For example, a point of entry for dialogue with armed non-state actors that is receiving increasing attention is the idea of obtaining concrete commitments from such

groups to abide by the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law, especially concerning the special protection that they offer children.

The central aim of post-conflict peacebuilding is to prevent a return to conflict, a key element of which must be ensuring that youth are occupied and usefully engaged in activities that contribute positively to society. Promoting participatory approaches towards youth will contribute significantly to encouraging and safe-guarding long-term development.

A more balanced perspective of 'who' children and youth actually are will help to create more effective and active engagement in addressing their own security needs. Casting them as helpless victims, or demons, does not help in establishing a better understanding of how they are experiencing security, and the coping mechanisms that they themselves are deploying. Underestimating children undermines their own ability to contribute to their healthy development, and ignores the fact that they are the holders of specific rights that recognise their dependency, development stage, and protection needs.

As has been argued, children's security does matter, and the best way of advancing this important element of the security agenda is through strengthening the existing security governance framework, in particular, with a focus on engaging civil society and, secondly, through reinforcing the human rights perspective of security.

Endnotes

* David Nosworthy is Fellow, Special Programmes at DCAF, responsible for the Children in an Insecure World project. Thanks go to Alan Bryden and Anja Ebnöther for their invaluable advice and support. Comments on this paper would be welcomed and should be addressed to: d.nosworthy@dcaf.ch

¹ Other DCAF projects to be drawn on are the preparatory work conducted with the Slovak government ahead of them raising security sector reform (SSR) for debate by the UN Security Council, a joint DPKO/UNDP project on The UN Approach to Security Sector/System Reform in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Review of Recent Experience of UN Integrated Missions, and the Children in an Insecure World book that is due for publication later this year.

² Ponzio, R. (2007). The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: origins and initial practice. Disarmament Forum, The Peacebuilding Commission, 2 (2007), p. 6.

³ United Nations General Assembly (1992). An Agenda for Peace: Preventative Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping, Report of the Secretary General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992. UN Doc. A/47/277-S/2411, para. 21.

⁴ United Nations Security Council (2001). Statement by the President of the Security Council. UN Doc. S/PRST/2001/5.

⁵ United Nations Security Council, 5632nd Meeting. UN doc. S/PV.5632 (Resumption 1), 20 February, 2007, p. 17-18.

⁶ *Statement by the President of the Security Council* at the 5632nd meeting of the Security Council, held on 20 February 2007; S/PRST/2007/3 (21 February 2007).

⁷ United Nations Peacebuilding Commission official website (2007). United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. Available online at: <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/index.html>

⁸ United Nations Peacebuilding Commission official website (2007). Questions and Answers on the UN Peacebuilding Commission. Available online at: <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/questions.htm>

⁹ Barnett, M., Hunjoon, K., O'Donnell, M., Sitea, L. (2007). Peacebuilding: What is in a Name? Global Governance, vol. 13, 2007, p. 36.

¹⁰ United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (2006). Conference Room Paper for the Country Specific Meeting on Sierra Leone. UN Doc. PBC/2/SIL/CRP.1, and United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (2006). Conference Room Paper for the Country Specific Meeting on Burundi. UN Doc. PBC/2/BUR/CRP.2.

¹¹ The Special Court for Sierra Leone transferred Charles Taylor to the ICC on the 20 June 2006, due to concerns about stability in the region, for the purpose of using the facilities of the ICC during his trial. He was originally charged with 17 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law (later amended to 11 counts), including conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces, or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities.

¹² Source from UNICEF website (2007): Children in Emergency and Conflict. Available online at: http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_armedconflict.html

¹³ Department for International Development (2005). Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states. P. 9. Available online at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/fragilestates-paper.pdf>

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ The World Bank (2007). World Development Report: Development and the next Generation. P. 166. Available online at: <http://go.worldbank.org/N17EUZ4T31>

¹⁶ Source: Hyden, G., Court, J. (2002). Governance and Development. United Nations University. http://www.odi.org.uk/wga_governance/Docs/WGS-discussionPaper1.pdf

¹⁷ Source: Ball and others forthcoming, cited in UNDP Human Development Report 2002, Chapter 4: Democratizing security to prevent conflict and build peace. Available online at: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/pdf/chapterfour.pdf>

¹⁸ OECD-DAC (2005). DAC Guidelines and Reference Series: Security System Reform and Governance. Available online at: www.oecd.org/dac/conflict/ssr

¹⁹ OECD-DAC (2007). OECD-DAC Handbook on Security System Reform. Available online at: www.oecd.org/dac/conflict/if-ssr

²⁰ Adapted from: Save the Children Sweden/UNICEF (2000). Children's Rights: Turning Principles into Practice. Save the Children Sweden.

²¹ Bryden, A., Hänggi, H. (2005). Reforming and Reconstructing the Security Sector. In: Bryden, A., Hänggi, H., (eds.). Security Governance in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, p. 31.

²² United Nations (2006). Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS). IDDRS Module 5.30: Children and DDR. Available online at: <http://www.unndr.org/iddrs/framework.php>