

Action for the Rights of Children

A Training and Capacity-Building Initiative On Behalf of Refugee Children and Adolescents



 **Save the Children**
INTERNATIONAL SAVE THE CHILDREN


UNHCR

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Welcome

My report to the UN General Assembly, *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, concludes that the international community must improve its protection and care of children and adolescents in conflict situations. For this to occur, UN agencies and international NGOs must develop field activities that effectively address problems specific to children. Children's needs will only be adequately met at an operational level, however, when UN field personnel and staff of humanitarian organisations view children affected by armed conflict as a distinct and priority concern.

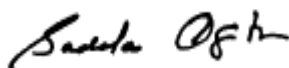
UNHCR and its implementing partners are often the first agencies to intervene in emergencies. Their collaboration is essential to the development of additional training programs on behalf of refugee children and adolescents. Capacity-building programs will ensure that children's rights and needs will be met by staff who are cognisant of the appropriate methods and actions to take on behalf of refugee children.

It is within this context that I introduce to you ARC (Action for the Rights of Children), a training and capacity-building initiative undertaken by UNHCR and the International Save the Children Alliance. ARC is the first comprehensive training program to address the concerns of refugee children and adolescents affected by armed conflict. ARC is a community-based, culturally-appropriate training program focused on children's psychosocial and developmental considerations, and I believe it is a critical step toward the greater realisation of children's rights on an operational level.



Ms. Graça Machel, expert to the Secretary-General, United Nations

I welcome the ARC initiative as part of UNHCR's efforts to implement the recommendations of the Machel Report. Within our mandate of providing international protection, UNHCR is in a unique position to exercise leadership on behalf of refugee children and adolescents. A comprehensive training program that addresses such concerns as unaccompanied refugee children, sexual exploitation, education, and the prevention and monitoring of military recruitment of children, is long overdue.



Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Since its founding in 1919, Save the Children has been committed to the care and protection of children affected by armed conflict. We have, therefore, long given priority to our collaboration with UNHCR, both in operational work and in the development of policies and guidelines on refugee children. But policies and guidelines are only of value when they are translated from words into concrete action. We are determined that Action for the Rights of Children will help ensure an effective response to Graça Machel's challenge to turn good intentions into real change for children.



Görel Thurdin, Chair of international Save the Children Alliance

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What is ARC ?

Action for the Rights of Children, or ARC, is a collaborative initiative between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Save the Children Alliance. **ARC's primary goal is to increase the capacity of UNHCR, government, and NGO field staff to protect and care for children and adolescents in emergency situations.**

ARC directly links training to field operations. Participants of regional pilot trainings review the content of modules and identify training methods in accordance with the political, economic, social, and cultural context of the region. In turn, ARC's participatory framework engages regional staff to identify pilot projects that address critical issues affecting children and adolescents.



These pilot projects are funded through a UNHCR trust fund for refugee children and adolescents.

ARC reinforces the child and adolescent components of existing UNHCR and NGO emergency training programs. Workshops establish regional training teams who identify training needs and develop action plans. Needs are addressed through further ARC trainings, joint NGO-UNHCR situation assessments, and team deployments. As children and adolescent concerns become increasingly part of mainstream programming, ARC evolves from a free-standing initiative into a resource that is incorporated into existing training programs.

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Rationale



UNHCR's Refugee Children's Unit and R dda Barnen (Save the Children, Sweden) initiated ARC as a direct response to the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. The Machel Study indicates that UNHCR is often one of the first agencies to intervene in emergencies, where 52% of refugees and other people of concern to the agency are children and adolescents. In addition, UNHCR-NGO partnerships are often the most effective means of ensuring "on the spot" protection and assistance to children and adolescents.



ARC is a compendium of guidelines, critical issues, case studies, and participatory methodology that encourages field workers and policy programmers to integrate their experience into regional situations. Its content is divided into three sections, Foundations, Tools and Critical Issues. Both sections include an age-gender perspective to ensure that girls and boys benefit equally from all protection and assistance efforts.



Foundations

International Legal Standards and Principles
Fundamental Principles of Child and Adolescent Development
Durable Solutions

Tools

Community Mobilisation
Situation Analysis
ARC Facilitators Toolkit
Case Studies

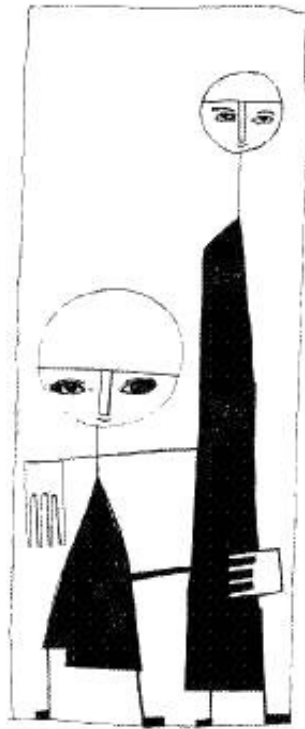
Critical Issues

Separated Children
Child Soldiers
Landmine Awareness
Reproductive Health
Disability
Exploitation and Abuse
Education



ARC is directed by a **Steering Committee** consisting of representatives from the Alliance and UNHCR. **Module editors and writers**, selected by the Steering Committee in consultation with NGOs, prepare and develop modules. A larger **Advisory Group** reviews training modules and is comprised of representatives of the Alliance, UNHCR, IRC, WHO, UNICEF, as well as other organisations.

ARC is generously supported by the governments of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the United States.



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Time-Frame

1998 Operations

Completed drafts of training modules; Carried out four regional, capacity-building workshops (Horn of Africa, Central Asia, West Africa, former CIS); Initiated pilot projects in all four regions; Incorporated contributions of workshop participants into modules.

1999 Expansion

Conduct Training of Trainers workshops in each region; Expand regional scope of workshops; Mainstream ARC into existing programmes; Publish and distribute complete ARC Materials; Create Internet resource site.



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Operations

Regional pilot trainings

During 1998, four ARC pilot trainings are held in the following regions: Central Asia, Horn of Africa, West Africa, and the former-CIS. Pilot trainings develop participants' capacity to protect and care for children and adolescents in emergency situations. Participants identify core members of a regional training team, who outline a plan of action, time frame, and budget for the regional training program in 1999. In collaboration with Alliance field staff, UNHCR Regional Child Policy Officers co-ordinate the 1999 regional training programs from the field. It is through this regional training program that ARC becomes a resource that is incorporated into existing training programs.

Regional Pilot Projects

Pilot trainings are only one component of ARC. In addition to capacity building workshops, ARC uses pilot projects to directly link training to field operations. Pilot projects address a wide spectrum of issues and target groups. Potential projects could focus on children's participation, laws and policies affecting children, or broader structural adjustments of organisations on behalf of children. Potential pilot projects could address the following:

- **Rights of youth-headed households:** Youth-headed households, often girl-headed, could be encouraged to develop mechanisms by which their community could support their education and realise their property rights;
- **Demobilisation of child soldiers:** A mass radio broadcasting campaign could support programming which advocates for the demobilisation of child soldiers in regions such as West Africa.
- **Exploitation of children:** Increased family and household security could be promoted in order to minimise the exploitation of children during such instances as forced child labour, sexual exploitation, or children living on the street, for example.

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Module Abstracts

FOUNDATIONS

International Legal Standards and Principles

Effective protection of refugee children requires an initial recognition of the rights to which all children are entitled. Such rights are well-established under international law, and in turn, have been incorporated into UNHCR policy. This module outlines the legal foundations for protection of refugee children, taking as its starting point the state's responsibility for protecting the human rights of all persons within its territory, including refugee children. The module examines the guiding legal principles that provide the basis for prioritised action on behalf of refugee children, and additionally, suggests means of implementing these actions.

Fundamental Principles of Child and Adolescent Development

The foundation of effective operational approaches to children and adolescents in emergencies rests upon an appreciation of the fact that concepts of childhood and child development are deeply rooted in their particular cultural context. Because children and adolescents develop according to social relationships, the most successful interventions are those that support primary caregivers and strengthen existing social networks. This module looks at successful interventions, as well as the potential long-term developmental consequences of immediate, short-term decisions that don't take anticipatory, preventive approaches. The module also discusses the "best interest" principle, which regards children and adolescents as active agents with strengths, vulnerabilities, and varied degrees of adult-dependency. In addition, the module looks at how to identify "high-risk groups" within the context of long-term social and economic reintegration, in order to minimise the potential marginalisation and neglect that may occur when scarce resources are channelled to a narrowly-defined "risk group."

Durable Solutions

One of UNHCR's primary functions is to seek durable solutions for refugees. This module looks at the guiding principles of voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement for refugee children and adolescents; the particular needs and difficulties which children may have while in transit and while integrating and reintegrating into communities; and appropriate action to meet these needs, or minimise or overcome these difficulties. The module focuses on voluntary repatriation and reintegration, as it often is, when feasible, the durable solution most likely to apply to the greatest number of refugee children. However, special considerations relating to local integration in the country of first asylum and third-country resettlement will also be considered.

TOOLS

Situation analysis

Situation analysis is the process of assessing complex refugee situations within their wider social, economic, political, and cultural context in order to strategically integrate children's issues into overall co-ordination efforts. Information must be systematically gathered and then analysed with regard to the principle rights, resources, and problems facing a refugee population. This module offers a broad introduction to the key issues, skills, and techniques of information gathering and analysis essential to planning decisions on behalf of children in refugee emergencies. Case-study exercises based on real-life situations show the significance of both qualitative and quantitative information to such analysis, and highlight how difficult decisions must sometimes be based on incomplete or contradictory information.

Community Mobilisation

Community mobilisation enables refugees to create, develop, and apply social structures for identifying and responding to the needs of families and children. This module looks at ways to establish and re-establish community leadership structures, including women's groups, school committees, separated children committees, and participatory voting systems. Political and power relationships are examined in light of leadership's capacity to adequately represent child, family, and community concerns. The module also considers the mobilisation of young people, and particularly, their participation in the community decision-making process.

ARC Facilitator's Toolkit

This module has been produced as a resource for people who will be facilitating an ARC Workshop. The module can serve as an introduction to training and facilitating, but is best used in the development of ARC programmes. The Toolkit provides instructions on developing materials which incorporate a participatory training method, gives guidelines for the writing and production of handouts and overhead projections, and suggestions for evaluating training. A collection of case studies taken from various regions and covering an extensive range of ARC topics is included for use by the facilitators.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Separated Children

Guided by the principle of family unity, this module looks at ways to prevent the separation of children from their parents during emergencies. The module examines the causes of separation, as well as methods to prevent both accidental and voluntary separation. Of particular concern throughout the module are the principles and procedures of emergency evacuation. Identification, documentation, tracing, and reunification services are also addressed from the period of emergency tracing until follow-up.

Child Soldiers

This module creates an understanding of children's active involvement in armed conflict. It focuses on measures to prevent recruitment, as well as appropriate procedures for demobilisation. Ways to facilitate social integration, such as family reunification, education, and income-generating activities, are also explored. Special consideration is given to the impact of armed conflict on children's psychological and social development.

Disability

This module explores differing concepts of disability according to regional and cultural attitudes toward the situation of disabled children. The condition of disabled children is examined through the following questions: Are levels of survival for disabled children equivalent to those of non-disabled children? Do disabled children attend school? Do disabled children participate in games and activities with other children? The module will also look at how the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other legislation which concerns disabled children can help determine ways to ensure both the protection of disabled children and their participation in children's activities. In addition, the module looks at the importance of advocacy work surrounding issues concerning disabled children, particularly the contribution of parent organisations and disabled-people organisations.

Education

This module aims to provide Senior Managers, Programme Staff and Field Staff with what they need in order to ensure that the education rights of the children within their jurisdiction/care are fully met. The module takes as its starting point the relevant legal instruments that underpin children's rights to education. It shows how to be prompt and efficient in setting up educational activities in emergency. Thereafter, the module offers general information about education, the role of adults within the process, what should be taught and how, and about how to ensure that all children and adolescents are included.

Landmine Awareness

This module provides guidelines for determining the need for mine education and strategies for programmes which will modify the behaviour of children as to reduce their risk of being killed or injured. The importance of community and children involvement in the conception, organisation and implementation of mine education programmes is highlighted.

Child and Adolescent Preventive Health

This module primarily focuses on ways to encourage the involvement of children and adolescents (with their families and communities) in preventive health activities. The module addresses health problems particularly of concern to children, including STDs and HIV/AIDS, psychosomatic illness and stress, and substance abuse. Found throughout the module are issues of child and adolescent development, as well as the social, cultural, and ethical issues relating to all aspects of child and adolescent preventive health.

Exploitation and Abuse

Children and adolescents are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse during flight, while in exile, and in the process of voluntary repatriation and reintegration. Using the principles contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in UNHCR guidelines and policy as a framework, this module looks at risk situations, preventative measures, and how to respond when children are exploited or abused. Particular attention is paid to the prevention of, and response to, sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

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Resource Library



The ARC resource library is a collection of UNHCR, Alliance, and other organisations' relevant training materials on child and adolescents in emergencies. The library includes a wide range of guidelines, policies, best practices, training materials, and videos that have been used as references in the design and development of ARC materials.

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