

Reflections of Children Caught in the Crossfires from the Fading Mirrors of Humanity: Whose Fault? Whose Gain? Whose Responsibility?

Akeem Opeyemi Akinbode*

Family Medicine Department, Federal Medical Centre, Birnin-kebbi, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: Akeem Opeyemi Akinbode, Family Medicine Department, Federal Medical Centre, Birnin-kebbi, Nigeria.

Received: November 09, 2023; Published: November 24, 2023

Abstract

As the world continues to experience conflicts and wars perpetually at different times and in diverse places globally, vulnerable populations especially children become deprived of their supposedly-uninterrupted human rights. The health and lives of children are often trampled upon during the un-natural disasters like conflicts and wars which are triggered and executed by adults who vie for power, wealth, or ego. Children need special protection in conflict and war- turned zones where they are often caught in the crossfires of starvation, disease, abuse, and even *bullets*. A look at the mirrors of humanity within the perimeters of conflict- and war-ravaged places, undoubtedly reflects helpless children in confusion, while experiencing de-humanization as they fade away as they are being watched and neglected to face an undeserving destiny imposed on them by their human predators, who should be their protectors.

This opinion essay aims to stimulate the urgent, and not-to-be negotiated need for all stakeholders in all *nooks and crannies* across the world to ensure the protection of all children in conflict- and war- turned places.

Keywords: Reflections of Children; Crossfires; Fading Mirrors; Humanity

Introduction

A common school children's anthem in a popular developing country in Africa is "*Parents, listen to your children, 'cos they are the leaders of tomorrow*". Obviously, children must have believed in their parents, that parents would secure their future for them. However, it appears that only a fraction of children who learned the tune in school *yesterday* actually lives to become the leaders of *today*. Moreover, under ideal natural circumstances, a good number of those young ones would really transform into leaders of the future, while *a few* would become *leaders of all times* against all odds. With the current *arguably unstable* global political atmosphere, the innocent hopes of children are being dimmed not by predators in the woods while the youngsters are on a play mission, but by the people who are asking children to *pay rents* with their future, and even their lives! The parents who have been assigned by nature to ensure that the children are provided with the best available opportunities are made to become helpless, and unable to nurture the aspirations in their children. This opinion essay aims to dissect, interconnect, and outlay the possible solutions to the issues surrounding the often surfacing but neglected dilemma of children caught in the crossfires of conflicts and wars (C-W) in many countries in the contemporary world. The aim could possibly stimulate interest in the *Special Issue* among the relevant academia, and professional bodies.

The lives and health of children in conflict and war zones

Reports from UNICEF stated that greater than 300,000 grave violations were carried out against children in conflict and war affected regions between 2005 and 2022 [1]. In addition, not less than 120,000 children were killed or maimed during C-W around the globe across continents in the same period, reflecting an average of almost 20 children daily [1]. At least 105,000 children were recruited or used by either armed groups, or the formal armed forces [1]. There were more than 32,500 abducted children, and 16,000 were subjected to sexual abuse [1]. The stated violations were committed in greater than 30 conflict zones across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East [1]. The UN also verified more than 16,000 cases of attacks on hospitals and schools, and greater 22,000 instances of renunciation of humanitarian access for children [1]. The true toll was described to be likely to be far higher, as the reports were only for the verified cases. The reports illustrate the devastating impact of C-W on children. In order to proffer solutions, UNICEF co-organized a conference with other intergovernmental, governmental, and non-governmental organizations. UNICEF then made specific commitments to consolidate her initial commitment to the protection of children in conflicts and wars [1].

Children caught in conflict- and war- (C-W) afflicted zones constitute a vulnerable population that deserve special attention for protection and healthcare. As man-made disasters continue to ravage humanity across the globe, children have been made victims of avoidable and often unyielding conflicts and wars, which are always ignited by adults. History has never told us of C-W sparked by children, we only always hear of children as victims of those outrages. Children are the reflections of any community, and they can only glow where and when there is peace. The health and lives of children caught up in the crossfires in *zones on fire* require responsible *parents* in every society, to protect children from the ill effects of man-made disasters. *Parents* are not only the biological entities, as every right-thinking adult in every society does not need to be tutored that children are the responsibilities of all adults. With the available *media platforms* in the contemporary *jet age*, it is almost impossible to hide anything happening under the sky. Information, news and data from C-W areas all over the world do not speak well of the trauma being inflicted on children when C-W break out. Children being brutalized, beaten, raped, maimed, starved, recruited as soldiers, killed *etc* are a few of the unforgivable atrocities that adults commit against children. Abuses against children should not have been imagined, let alone executed by any right-minded adult of any breed. Children are exposed to unheard and unseen injuries in their bodies and minds when C-W occur. In addition, they undoubtedly experience neglect, hunger, disease, bullying, or one form of slavery-like condition or the other. Therefore, it is pertinent that local, national, and international authorities keep the welfare of children in mind, and reflected in their actions when conflicts and war break out anywhere around the world.

Whose fault?

Parents, as expected become helpless when C-W occur, and children are mostly left to fend for themselves. The perpetrators of any form of abuse or trauma against a child are directly to be blamed, while the initiators of C-W are the major players in the deprivation of the rights of children. Abuse of children through the infliction of physical or psychological injury on them may undoubtedly be described as a crime against humanity. Children should be spared of any form of injury in times of C-W anywhere in the world. The societies which have neglected children to cater for themselves in periods of chaos should not be excluded when the blame arises. Thus, organizations should deem it fit to consider the protection of the health and lives of children a key priority in places where conflicts and war are ravaging. Community leaders and governments should not hesitate to take up the duty of protecting children in those tense circumstances, otherwise their hands may be soiled with the bloods of innocent children.

Whose gain?

Conflicts and wars become the motives of adults in the course of the race for power, wealth, political affluence, or rivalry. So, why should children be the *sacrificial lambs*? There is no gain for the cognitively upright people in dehumanizing children under any circumstance. On the other hand, it appears more of an intentional act of hurting the *enemy* by traumatizing their children. The predators believe they are making gains by making children pay the price. It is actually no gain for anyone, but a loss to humanity that children are not only left unprotected but injured physically or psychologically during C-W due to faults that are not theirs.

Whose responsibility?

Child health protection advocates are multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary. As the biological advocates of children become *toothless* during crises, and cannot protect their children from the *vultures*. Community leaders should be ready to provide protection for children before and during C-W crises by proactively planning for safe haven for children when preparations are being made to defend themselves from the *enemy*. Warring governments should not only focus on fighting the opposition, but also keep in mind that if the adults are wiped out during the outrage, children would be the substitute of their colony generation when the children have been protected. In times of C-W, children need to be protected by not just their *societal parents*, but also by *international parents* who should put in place not only international laws, but unbreakable protective measures and actions for ensuring the safety of children during C-W in affected places during mayhem.

Health professionals have a huge role to play. Paediatricians and Child Health advocates all over the world can play a robust role by giving a strong voice to the protection of children and provision of healthcare for these special population during conflict and wars. The health of children should not be left to chance, let alone toiling with their lives during situations of turmoil. Humanitarian agencies need to make the protection of children a strategically planned duty that are backed by the international law, in order to ensure the availability and access to healthcare services for children during periods of conflicts and wars.

Conclusion

To conclude, as human rights of children are usually overturned in times of wars and conflicts, it is vital that all relevant stakeholders give special attention to the health and lives of children in order to protect them from the atrocities that they are at risk of during periods of mayhem. The rays of reflections from the mirrors of the wellbeing of children within the zones of crossfires continue to fade away when children's health and lives are left to chance due to the neglect and abuse that they experience. To ensure that humanity is giving its right belonging, children should be protected *against all odds*, and be given a right to life not only in times of peace, but also in periods of conflicts and wars.

Funding Support

There is no funding attached to this opinion essay.

Political Affiliation

None.

Bibliography

1. United Nations Children Fund. More than 300,000 grave violations against children in conflict verified worldwide in past 18 years. [online] Accessed 8 November (2023). Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-300000-grave-violations-against-children-conflict-verified-worldwide-past-18>

Volume 12 Issue 12 December 2023

©All rights reserved by Akeem Opeyemi Akinbode.