

Helping Children in Conflict



For every child a childhood

Armed conflict is shattering the lives of millions of children worldwide. Children are among **the most vulnerable victims** in times of conflict: they are often injured, recruited by armed groups, separated from their families, driven from their homes, killed, sexually abused, exploited, forced to drop out of school...

Violence has long-term repercussions on children. Even though children can find extraordinary **ways to cope with traumatic experiences**, war undermines children's lives and futures, destroying their homes and hopes, tearing apart their communities and shattering their innocence.



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Despite these devastating consequences, global humanitarian funding for children affected by conflict is limited. Indeed, **child protection and education in emergencies are among the least funded** humanitarian sectors, since the life-saving provisions of food, shelter and medicine often take priority.

Receiving the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize for its achievement of peace on the European continent, the EU decided to dedicate the prize money **to help boys and girls around the world who are deprived of growing up in peace.**

Here are a few examples of projects we support worldwide to help children in conflicts.



Colombia

In Colombia, one out of four guerrilla or paramilitary soldiers is under the age of 18. On the outskirts of Cali and Medellin, an area largely controlled by illegal armed groups, the European Commission and Save the Children UK create child-friendly spaces where children can play, paint or take pictures. By getting children off the streets after school, we protect them from illegal recruitment.

In Nariño, one of the departments most affected by the conflict, the European Commission funds projects implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to set up temporary schools so that displaced children can get back to a “normal life” as soon as possible.

A group of children and adults are gathered inside a large, white tent. The tent's interior is decorated with colorful murals, including one of a sailboat and another of a landscape with trees. A man in a red shirt and a woman in a red top are interacting with the children. A child in the foreground is wearing a blue backpack with the UNICEF logo and the text 'European Union'. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Syrian refugees

Tens of thousands of children had to flee their homes in Syria. Many have experienced and witnessed things no child should ever see: bombings, killings, torture and other atrocities. The European Commission works with the humanitarian organisations Save the Children Jordan and UNICEF to create child and adolescent-friendly spaces, where youngsters can meet, play and talk about their experiences.

This summer, 3.500 Syrian refugee children went on a summer camp to catch up on missed education and to learn how to recover from their violent past.

A young child with dark skin is shown from the chest up, wearing a traditional headwrap and a patterned garment. The child is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Escalating violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has uprooted hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. The European Commission works with War Child to support more than 20 000 children and young people affected by the armed conflict in Kivu, in the east part of the country.

Social workers, police, teachers, medical personnel and community workers are trained to give support, care and protection to traumatized children: orphans, children forced to flee their homes, children separated from their families, survivors of sexual violence or exploitation. So far, 2,100 vulnerable children and youths, 1,000 parents and 1,800 community workers have participated in this project.



Occupied Palestinian territory

In the occupied Palestinian territory (oPT), generations of children have been struggling with the consequences of the occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza. Apart from providing basic assistance, such as food, shelter and clean water, the European Commission also funds psychosocial support for traumatized children. This summer our partner organization Action Contre la Faim organized its second annual summer camps project for 170 school children in South Hebron, giving a “breathing space” to children coming from one of the West Bank’s most vulnerable areas. The European Commission and Save the Children Sweden are also assisting Palestinian ex-detainee children in the West Bank, helping them to cope with the trauma through counseling and re-integration activities.



South Sudan

Communal conflicts and border disputes continue to uproot people from their homes in the Republic of South Sudan which marked its first anniversary as an independent country in 2012. The risks facing children with no parents or relatives to look after them are a matter of great concern in the country.

With European Commission funding, UNICEF runs child protection projects throughout the whole country to help these children starting a new life. Child protection workers from different implementing partners help with family tracing, reunification and other services. Some 2.400 children were reunified with their families or placed in interim care. 9.000 receive psychosocial support and other protection services in child-friendly centres.



Burmese refugees

Just inside Thailand's western border, some 145,000 Burmese refugees live in 9 camps, including a whole generation of children whose lives have been restricted to the confines of a refugee camp. Humanitarian assistance is not only about helping people to survive, it is also about helping people to rebuild their lives. The European Commission is working with Save the Children to train social workers, themselves refugees, to better understand and help the youngsters. 300 social workers were trained and can now reach out to 8,000 children.


Training on recycling and agriculture were organized, young adults were taught to develop skills such as knitting, sewing, managing projects and accounting.



Côte d'Ivoire

Post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011 left 3,000 people dead and forced over one million from their homes. With funding from the European Commission, UNICEF is providing health authorities with a stable supply of medicines, while other organisations such as Médecins du Monde work in 3 hospitals and 42 health centres in the south-west of the country.

Thanks to the European funding, more than 160,000 children under five and pregnant women are receiving free quality health care.



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