



Children Born of War: Considerations for Policymakers

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Executive Summary

In the past few decades, the topic of conflict-related sexual violence has been an increasing part of the agenda both in research among civil society organizations and in politics. Despite the growing awareness that wars not only take but also begin lives, policymakers have long overlooked the topic of children born of war (CBOW). The ongoing discourse for the most part addresses children born of conflict-related sexual violence, despite evidence that children are conceived during war through a variety of relationships along and across conflict lines. For many CBOW, postwar stigmatization and discrimination is not solely associated with the act of conception; what defines the child is the role the father is perceived to have had in the conflict, especially if that role was related to the aggressing armed group or military. This implies that the perception of the father as being part of an enemy military, paramilitary, or rebel group is passed along to his offspring, oftentimes with harmful consequences.

Due to the lack of voices and access to children born of war, the perspectives of those children are overwhelmingly missing in ongoing research and policy developments. To close this gap:

1. A child-centered approach needs to be at the center of CBOW research and policy.
2. Any of the 196 State Parties to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child should propose an amendment to the treaty that explicitly mentions CBOW.
3. The international humanitarian community should recognize CBOW and their mothers as special victims of armed hostilities.
4. Local education and training on the basic human rights of CBOW, in particular the right to birth registration and to obtain citizenship, should begin as early as possible in conflict situations, and cultural and political contexts must be taken into consideration.
5. CBOW must be explicitly addressed in humanitarian guidelines and documents so international mechanisms and agendas, like the Women, Peace and Security agenda, can secure the [human rights](#) of CBOW.
6. Countries affected by conflict should introduce long-term monitoring systems to communicate with and follow up on CBOW to improve the evidence base for policy developments.
7. Countries affected by conflict should begin legislating protections for CBOW as soon as possible.
8. Civil society, academia, governmental organizations, policymakers, and all other relevant stakeholders should work to break down siloes within the field of CBOW. Evidence-based policy developments that serve CBOW can be achieved when academics, practitioners, organizations, and other relevant stakeholders focus on cooperation rather than reinventing the wheel and protecting their own interests.