

# Children in conflict: Exploitation versus dignity



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World Health  
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HEALTH  
**EMERGENCIES**  
programme

# Case studies: focusing on health consequences

Media portrayal of child patients in conflict

Mental health of children in displacement

Health consequences of child marriage in conflict



*Photographs by Nocem Collado*



Are we **infringing** on the **dignity** of children in conflict in our efforts to **sensitize the world** to the horrors of it?



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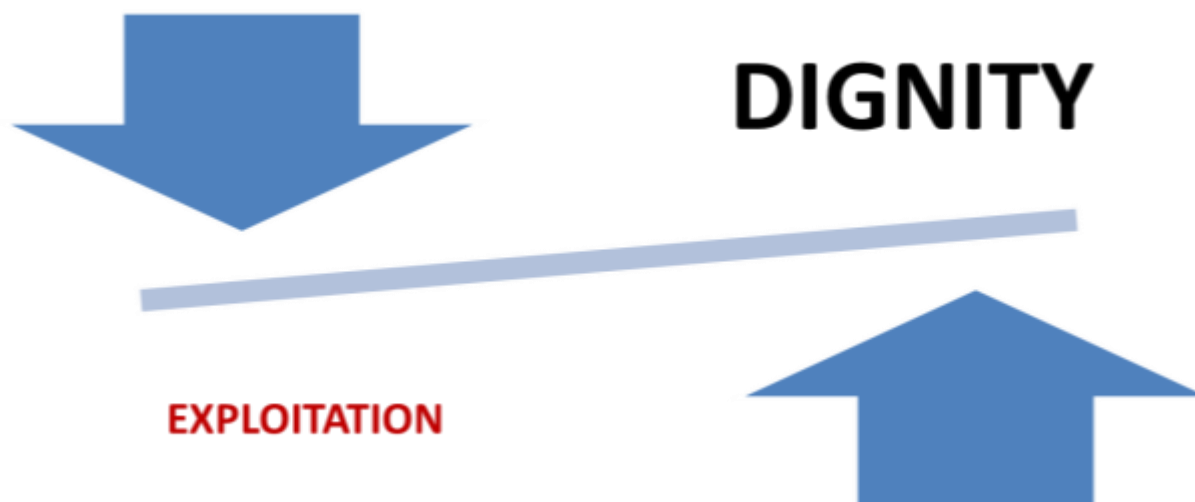
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# Media portrayal of child patients in conflict

Does the greater good outweigh patients' rights or do we have to **rethink the boundaries** of the concept of informed consent?

Do children have the right to remain **anonymous patients**?



# Mental health of children in displacement

## Children in displacement are at risk of developmental and behavioral disorders

To be effective, mental health interventions require:

- Basic needs are met
- Person must be outside the traumatic setting
- Continuous access to treatment must be guaranteed

However, in IDP/refugee settings the above **preconditions are not fulfilled.**

**Do we get the ethics for intervening right?**  
**Can we review our narrative?**



# Health consequences of child marriage

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Increases in contexts of protracted conflict

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Questions cultural norms, not gender neutral

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Exacerbates local customs and social processes

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Causes death, reproductive and mental health issues

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Challenges humanitarian interventions

Child marriage has become an issue for humanitarian interventions and must be factored into the responses across disciplines and especially into **healthcare referral pathways**

## **Bride Aged 8 Dies After Suffering Internal Sexual Injuries During Wedding Night With Man, 40**

Huffington Post UK | By Sara C Nelson  

Posted: 09/09/2013 10:35 BST | Updated: 10/09/2013 08:25 BST



# Health consequences on children

Media portrayal of child patients in conflict

Rethink our approaches and revive the debate: blanket ban versus becoming numb to the violence towards children to a point where we might exploit their distress. **Need a strong justification.**





Mental health of internally displaced children

Mental health interventions must be integrated across disciplines and not be considered as standalone interventions. **Change our narrative.**

Health consequences of child marriage in conflict

Child marriage has become an issue for humanitarian interventions and must be factored into the responses across disciplines. **Focus on healthcare referral pathways.**

# Searching answers to the dilemma

Overarching principles	Procedural principles		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Dignity</li><li>- Beneficence</li><li>- Non-maleficence</li><li>- Self-determination</li><li>- Empowerment</li><li>- Autonomy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Engagement</li><li>- Participation</li><li>- Transparency</li><li>- Accountability</li></ul>		
			

**Establish ethics committees guiding humanitarian actors**



# Take home message

“Humanitarian organizations need to enhance the **ethical climate and infrastructure** to allow us to openly debate and contest these issues.

To improve the well-being of the children we serve, we need to strengthen our participatory approach and ensure that **children’s voices** are included in our health programming, that we **respect their dignity and address their needs holistically.**”

# Thank you for your attention

