Children in conflict: Exploitation versus dignity

Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference

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21 -23 March 2017
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?
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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<td>Increases in contexts of protracted conflict</td>
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<td>Questions cultural norms, not gender neutral</td>
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<td>Exacerbates local customs and social processes</td>
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<td>Causes death, reproductive and mental health issues</td>
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<td>Challenges humanitarian interventions</td>
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Child marriage has become an issue for humanitarian interventions and must be factored into the responses across disciplines and especially into **healthcare referral pathways**
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

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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