

Mental Health Consequences of Conflict on Children

With a special focus on children in the Central African Republic



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World Mental Health Day
10 Oct. 2014, New York



The event

Fracarita International, working together with **UNICEF**, UN Agencies and NGO partners, is calling for international attention on the **impact of armed conflict** on the **mental health** and **psychosocial well-being** of affected populations, with a specific **focus on children**. Therefore, Fracarita International, along with its partners, is organising on the occasion of **World Mental Health Day** a symposium on this issue, with a special focus on the children in the **Central African Republic**.

The symposium will take place on 10 October 2014 from 12.30 - 2.30 PM, at the Church Center: 777 1st Avenue, E 44th St, New York, NY 10017.

Seminar Snacks at 12 noon. (graciously offered by the Belgian Ambassador)

Purpose

The main purpose of this event is to **sensitize** the **international community** and the **public** about the consequences of armed conflicts on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of the affected populations. The event will convene a number of key stakeholders to review the impacts of the conflict on the well-being of children, with a special focus on the situation of children in the Central African Republic, and to **share experiences on good practices** in order to inform a way forward.

Themes

A range of topics related to the field of MHPSS will be addressed at the event, including:

- An overview of the **mental health consequences** of armed conflict on affected populations, especially children.
- **Care and support** to children and community members suffering from extreme distress. Findings from a recent review of the application of **IASC Guidelines on MHPSS** in the field.
- **Community-based psychosocial support**, with a focus on supporting resilience; Psychosocial support through Child Friendly Spaces, schools and other community mechanisms
- Mental health disorders and **context-specific responses**.

Background

The experience of an emergency can significantly impact the **psychosocial well-being and development of a child**. Exposure to violence, accumulation of stress, loss of or separation from family members and friends, deterioration in living conditions, inability to provide for one's self and family, increased militarization and divisions in societies and lack of access to services can all have immediate and long-term consequences for children, families and communities.

Terrible violence as a result of armed conflict continues to have a negative impact on children and their families in many areas of the world. Children have been killed, and continue to be directly targeted by violence, including rape, torture and mutilation. **The impact on the mental health of the people affected is often devastating**. People in extreme distress, especially children, often require special support. Stigma and discrimination can also add to the suffering, and the possible disability which can be associated with mental suffering often leads to social exclusion.

In the Central African Republic alone, more than **2 million children are suffering** the consequences of the crisis that erupted last year. The impact on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of these young people is enormous. The impact of this crisis on the health and social services too is immense, adding to the vulnerability of these children who may not have access to the support services they need. However, it is also important to remember that not all children react to distressing events in the same way; children can also be resilient and able to cope with difficult experiences, given time and basic community support.

It is important to note that this conflict is just one of **many crises** that has huge implications for the psychosocial well-being of children and caregivers across the world, as well as **long-term implications for stability in the world**. Armed conflict gives rise to an alarming range of child protection issues and protection concerns, including forced displacement, recruitment and use of children as soldiers, sexual violence, family separation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and exposure to combat and the use of explosive weapons.

Responding to these crises, UNICEF and other lead agencies working on the issue of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) are guided by The Inter-Agency Standing Committee **Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings**. The Guidelines are the official policy for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, endorsed by the leading agencies working in MHPSS response. Psychosocial support is a critical element in responding to the egregious violations that children are exposed to in the midst of armed conflict.

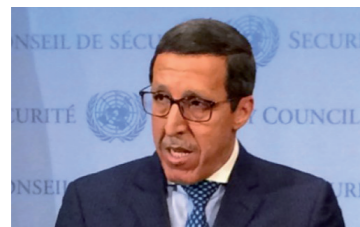


Keynote speakers



Leila Zerrougui

Prof. Zerrougui is currently Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. As a legal expert in human rights Prof. Zerrougui has had a distinguished career in the strengthening of the rule of law and in championing strategies for the protection of vulnerable groups, especially women and children.



Omar Hilale

H.E. Omar Hilale is the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations in New York. He is currently the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's configuration for the Central African Republic.



René Stockman:

Fracarita International's president, Bro. René Stockman, PhD, has an enormous experience in the field of mental health and will address the issues on the basis of his many visits to conflict areas.

Partnerships

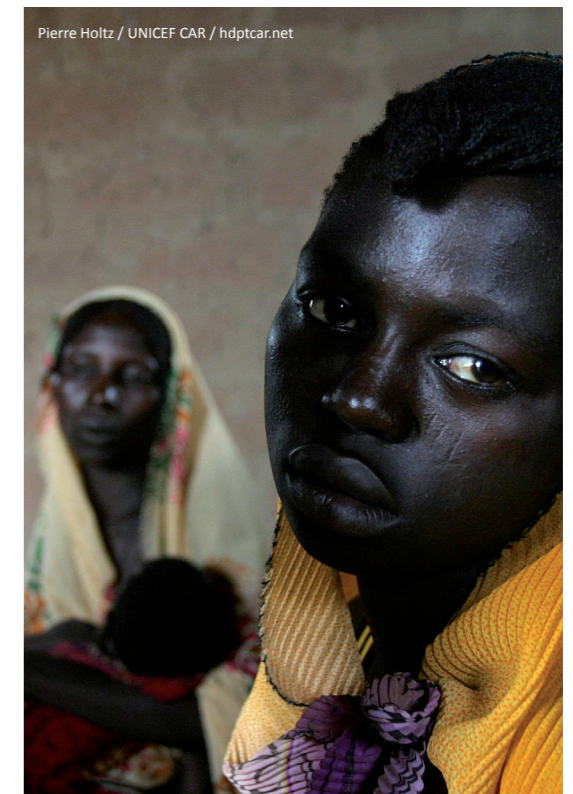
This event will be organised by **Fracarita International**, together with **UNICEF**, and with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, **Leila Zerrougui**, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, **Zainab Bangura**.

A number of agencies and networks will be represented, including, for example the **Global Child Protection Working Group** (CPWG), the **IASC Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support** and the **World Health Organization**.

Lead Agencies

Fracarita International is an international NGO. It has built up expertise in mental health advocacy and services and provides education, health care and dignified humanitarian outreach in more than 31 countries. In 2007, it won the prestigious Opus Prize for its innovative and qualitative work with the project AHADI in the refugee camps of Kigoma, Tanzania. It has an office in Bangui, Central African Republic.

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is the driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized. UNICEF upholds the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF is active in more than 190 countries and territories through country programmes and National Committees.



Please register for the symposium on our [website](#).