

Displacement and Children's Participation: Experiences from Non-Kashmiri Camps and Lessons Learnt

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I. Introduction

Armed conflict-related displacement has significant effects on the children (Alderman, Hoddinott and Kinsey, 2004; Verwimp, 2005; Bundervoet and Verwimp, 2005; de Walque, 2006; Shemyakina, 2006; Justino, 2006). Displacement often leads to the simultaneous destruction of assets and serious reductions in nutritional status of children (Alderman, Hoddinott and Kinsey, 2004; Bundervoet and Verwimp, 2005). Displacement affects important human capital determinants namely education and health. The disruption and destruction of infrastructure caused by violence often results in severe cutbacks in states' capacity to provide services such as education and health care (Stewart et al., 2001a, 2001b). Significant reductions in social services reinforce further the inability of households and children to fall back on state support in times of crises (e.g. safety-nets). Thus, displacement is associated with the destruction of lives of children (Dewhurst, 1998; Woodward, 1995). Displaced families and children are found amongst those living under the most difficult forms of socio-economic exclusion and deprivation.

In situations of armed conflict and displacement, children have often been identified and acknowledged as victims (OECD, 2001). Children's roles and contributions to their families and communities are generally unrecognized and often undermined (Lansdown, 2005; O' Kane, 2003). Recently, the importance of engaging with children as social actors and the need to understand and respond to the political and social reality of children's lives has been highlighted (Hart and Tyrer, 2006; Boyden, 1997; Kemper, 2005; O' Kane, 2007). Children's participation is not always an easy process. It often involves challenging children's traditional roles in society and transforming the relationships of power between adults and children. These changes are not always welcome at first, but through education and practical implementation, the benefits of child participation shine through (O' Kane, 2003). Children have their own valuable perspectives and priorities, which are often different to those of adults. Children living in displaced camps faced more abuse and harassment and suffered domestic violence (Brown, 2005). Children's priorities are mostly their day-to-day concerns and challenges rather than future worries.

In displaced settings, it is vital to understand how young children are affected by armed conflict and displacement, which of their rights are being violated, what participatory roles they take on, what they learn from participation and how they feel their participation can be supported. It is equally crucial that their views and experiences are heard and their participation be promoted to protect their own rights and to develop the community. Thus, there is need to understand children's perspectives on displacement and participation and respond to priorities based on their roles and responsibilities within families, communities and in broader society. In the present paper, an attempt has been made to document the experiences of young children in displaced settings and the importance of their participation to express their views and experiences, so that these can be heard, listened to and acted upon to protect and promote their rights. The paper highlights the contributions of children in their own protection, development and wellbeing as well as improving the overall environment of community, which has serious ramifications for child focused policy and programmatic interventions in displaced settings.

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II. Methodology

The study has been confined to children below the age of 18 years belonging to the non-Kashmiri displaced families living in three large displaced camps viz. Belicharana on the fringe of river Tawi, Khanpur (Nagrota) on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway at a distance of about 10 km, and Talwara in Reasi District at a distance of about 82 km from the Jammu city in Jammu region of State of Jammu and Kashmir. The primary data and information has been collected using the pre-tested questionnaire, focus group discussions and participatory appraisals. Both the unfocused and focused observation techniques have been used. The unfocused initial observations have been used to become increasingly familiar with the insider's world so as to refine and focus subsequent observation and data collection. All the observations have been recorded on site and misunderstanding, if any, has been corrected thereof. Highly formal interviews have been conducted using structured interview schedules. In-depth interviews have also been conducted to elicit opinion of stakeholders with extensive knowledge of the phenomenon under study. The content analysis technique has been used to analyze the data and information qualitatively and quantitatively (using descriptive statistics). The content analysis technique has been supplemented by use of code and label field notes, sorting, shifting, constructing and reconstructing these materials.

III. Displacement and Children's Participation: Theoretical Basis

The impact of armed conflict and displacement on the children has been devastating. Displaced children are inevitably viewed as victims and thus need protection. However, displaced children are not inherently vulnerable. They have strength and capacities for coping with adversity. Girls are commonly seen as especially vulnerable to abuse in situations of displacement. But they are made vulnerable not by inherent qualities but through the attitudes and behaviour of others. Besides, all "children" are not vulnerable. No group of children is homogenous in terms of the risks that they face. Age, gender, class, education, language, and particular setting place children differently with respect to the risks (and opportunities) created by displacement. Discrimination and marginalization are sources of risk that obviously affect certain children more than others.

Displacement affects the lives of the young children due to its impact on social structures, infrastructure and services. In displaced settings, health and health services are adversely affected. Increased poverty, higher incidence of disease and exposure to abuse are potential consequences of displacement. Displacement typically disrupts community practices and family life, all of which are implicated in the protection of children. In displaced settings, the family, the school and the community will not be able to play their expected role in mitigating the threats to children's wellbeing. The family home may well be the scene of abuse and neglect by parents. For example, the high incidence of alcoholism in displaced communities which will inevitably impact upon the ability of adults to offer appropriate care. Teachers, whose lives are subject to the same stresses as the rest of the community, are also known to inflict various forms of violence, for example, sexual violence directed by male teachers towards female students.

i. Children and Potential Changes Associated with Displacement

The changes resulting from armed conflict and displacement compel us to think about the empowerment of young children (see Box 1). Armed conflict and displacement commonly result in children participating more fully than ever in economic, social and political activities. The emerging demographic trends in armed conflict ridden societies indicate rapidly growing children population. Thus, children have to play a bigger role in society due to sheer weight of numbers. The potential of participatory projects to equip and facilitate children's groups to undertake their new or expanded roles effectively and associated risks have been widely recognized.

Box 1: Potential Changes due to Conflict and Displacement

Potential Changes	Explanation
Lack of service provision and inadequacy of infrastructure	Armed conflict and displacement commonly result in the loss or reduction of children’s access to properly functioning health and educational services. Not only is existing infrastructure often destroyed but the development of service provision that might otherwise take place is usually slowed down.
New or expanded roles for children within the family and community	New roles may often include greater involvement of children in economic activities, in domestic duties and care-giving, in the physical, moral and emotional support of siblings, peers and adults. Whilst not all of the new responsibilities and duties need necessarily entail risk for children, there is often a greater exposure to exploitation and to involvement in hazardous activities.
Exposure to more diverse and acute risks to their wellbeing	Armed conflict and displacement commonly exposes children to greater physical, social, emotional and psychological risks. Physical harm can result from increased risk of malnutrition and the lack of adequate healthcare, through abuse and harassment, and so on. The loss of educational and recreational opportunities, the experience of bereavement and displacement, increased social marginalization and isolation are some of the factors that may pose a risk to children's sense of wellbeing and their healthy psychosocial development.
Challenges to family, community and society	Familiar social structures and institutions are often seriously affected by armed conflict and displacement. Well-established values (intra-community and intergenerational relations and gender) may be brought into question and prescribed practices may be partially or wholly abandoned. In such a situation, social cohesion may be lost and networks of support and care severely reduced in their capacity. This clearly holds risk for children. At the same time, it is also possible that opportunities emerge for them to renegotiate social relations and established practices in an advantageous manner.

ii. Motivations of Children’s Participation

Children occupy a status less powerful than adults. However, they are still able to contribute to their own development and influence others. Clearly, their role for protection and development of self and community will depend not only on their personal character and competencies but also on the opportunities and constraints that exist in their environment. Displacement may create additional constraints upon children – they may, for example, be forced into various hazardous activities, including child labour. Or, out of fear for their wellbeing, parents may severely limit children’s engagement with society beyond the home. Displacement often creates additional possibilities for children to contribute their ideas, energies and skills in ways that enhance personal development and contribute significantly to the wider society. In displaced settings, children are not simply passive recipients of adult action but can positively contribute to their own wellbeing and their environment (see Box 2). They may develop participatory strategies – individually and in concert with others – for protection from the various risks associated with displacement. Thus, children’s participation in development programming has also been promoted to humanitarian initiatives.

Box 2: Motivations of Children’s Participation

Motivations	Explanations
Right to Participate	Realization of children’s right to participate is seen both as an end in itself <i>and</i> as the means to realize other rights expressed within the UNCRC.
Ensure Greater Relevance and Efficacy	Children’s participation helps to ensure the greater relevance and efficacy of projects and policies. Since the outlook, concerns and aspirations of children are likely to differ from those of adults, even of primary caregivers, it is important to engage directly with them, and not rely solely on others.
Harness Children’s Energies and Creativity	A participatory approach enables children’s energies and creativity to be harnessed for the good of themselves and their communities. Particularly in politically unstable settings, the failure to provide such opportunities for meaningful engagement in social action may lead children to engage with armed groups in order to alleviate the frustration that arises from living in oppressive and unjust conditions.
Enhance Growth and Development	Meaningful participation enhances children’s growth and development. Participatory approaches offer children the encouragement to actively engage with their environment advocacy, training and research.
Enhance Skills of Communication and Expression and Self-Confidence	Skills of communication and expression, self-confidence and a sense of personal efficacy are commonly enhanced. Furthermore, a participatory approach often enables children to acquire new insight into their situation and knowledge of practical relevance that may be helpful to themselves and their families.
Develops Collective Processes of Problem-Solving	Equip with knowledge as well as the greater understanding that develops from collective processes of problem-solving. Children’s participation can also change community and adult views of children’s capacities and in this way can inspire hope and greater trust.
Understand Democratic Principles	By involving children in projects and processes that are govern on principles of freedom of speech, equality and mutual respect, children will absorb the values and understanding required to ensure the democratic principles

iii. Practical Standards in Children’s Participation

The framework for children’s participation provides some standards to ensure consistent and high-quality child participation practice. It gives guidance and direction to adult facilitators in continuously improving their participatory practice (see Box 3). Child protection is integral to good child participation practice. The use of codes of conduct, particularly when developed in consultation with girls and boys as well as their parents and guardians within community settings, can be useful as they help to identify behaviour and good practice to make sure that children’s participation takes place within safe and respectful environments. The principle of ‘the best interests of the child’ should guide decisions with regard to what are and are not appropriate activities for children of different ages and abilities to engage in. Local NGOs and community groups are therefore often in the best position to regularly engaged with young children and to support them in raising their issues to the local authorities.

Box 3: Practice Standards in Children’s Participation

Standard	Explanation
Transparency, Honesty and Accountability	Adult facilitators are committed to ethical participatory practice and to the primacy of children’s best interests
Relevant and Voluntary	Children participate in processes and address issues that affect them – either directly or indirectly – and have the choice as to whether to participate or not
Friendly, Enabling Environment	Children experience a safe, welcoming and encouraging environment for their participation
Equality of Opportunity	Child participation does not reinforce existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion and encourages those groups of children who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from activities to be involved in participatory processes
Staff Effectiveness and Confidence	Adult facilitators involved in supporting/facilitating children’s participation are trained and supported to do their jobs to a high standard
Safety and Protection of Children	Child protection policies and procedures form an essential part of participatory work with children
Follow-up and Evaluation	Respect for children’s involvement is indicated by a commitment to provide feedback and/or follow-up and to evaluate the quality and impact of children’s participation

iv. Stakeholders in Children’s Participation

In displaced camps, the lives of children and their families are characterized by insecurity and marginalization. There are incidence of gross violation and denial of their rights – food, water, housing, protection, etc. When the displaced camp dwellers resort to put pressure on the state agencies through organized collective action for meeting their genuine rights, they are subjected to harassment and least attended by the state agencies. Besides, young children’s participation in conflict transformation and peace building makes pragmatic and constructive sense. For peace to be sustainable, the adults of tomorrow need to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the creation and maintenance of a climate of peace. Likewise, adult support to children’s contributions to the development and strengthening of their own initiatives is crucial. Children will benefit from encouragement and practical support from their parents, teachers, community elders, NGOs and government agencies (see Box 4).

Box 4: Role of Stakeholders in Supporting Children’s Initiatives

Stakeholders	Role
State Agencies	Strengthening the role of local police to protect and fulfill children’s rights Protecting from abduction, abuse, hunger and disease Providing access to education and health services Supporting families to relieve poverty, fair distribution of aid and assistance
Children	Building own resilience and make changes in their lives Sharing experiences and expressing views to increase strength and life skills and self-confidence Rebuilding social relationships and structures Enhancing security, rebuilding education, the economy and livelihoods
Adults	Supporting, establishing and strengthening of structures such as children’s groups Facilitating children’s groups to meet together and develop community development initiatives Provide children with practical resources, relevant information and skill training

v. Outcomes of Children’s Participation

Children’s participation is operationalized in different ways such as trainers and facilitators of child rights protection and community development, researchers in child focused participatory research, educators in child rights, basic life skills, HIV/AIDS, sexuality, etc and advocates and awareness campaigners regarding child rights, HIV/AIDS, etc. Children’s participation in protecting their own rights and developing local community is more likely to have beneficial and sustainable outcomes. The strength and experience gained through participation enhances young children’s engagement in policy development. The outcomes of children’s participation in local community are highlighted in Box 5.

Box 5: Outcomes of Children’s Participation in Local Community

Outcomes	Explanation
Self Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self-esteem, confidence, resilience and social responsibility • New friendships • Increased enthusiasm to address issues for benefit of peers and community • Improved communication, negotiation and team work skills • Improved analysis and presentation skills • Developed more positive relationships between children and adults • Improved educational performance
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in discrimination • Increased school enrolment and attendance • Increased teacher attendance and quality of teaching • Improved school facilities and accessibility • Protected from child abuse and harassment • Prevented child marriage and trafficking • Prevented illegal sale of alcohol in their communities • Increased birth registration • Improved health and sanitation practices • Improved environmental protection practices • Improved play and recreational facilities • Increased mobility of children (particularly girls) • Increased awareness and information on child right issues • Developed indicators to monitor child rights
Self-Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased status of children and their voices • Recognized as social actors • Challenged discrimination in the family, school and community • Changed teacher behaviour and more child-centred teaching methods
Tolerance and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased values, skills and knowledge of democratic functioning • Empowered with knowledge of their rights • Increased tolerance and values of inclusion
Space in Governance Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults accept children’s representation and views • Social changes in adult’s attitude and mindset • Increased accountability and accessible quality services to all children • Increased commitment among adults to work with and for children • Provided practical, innovative and inclusive solutions to children issues • Established linkages and networking for child rights • Recognized by development and relief agencies
Planning and Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed own perspectives and understanding of problems, solutions and priorities • Government agencies at different levels priorities children’s issues, and allocate budget • State level acceptance of children participation in policy dialogue
Media Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness and mobilized action on child rights issues • Mobilized mainstream media to write on child right issues
Networks of Children’s Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased bargaining power for advocacy on child rights issues • Exchange of learning and organizational development

vi. Challenges of Children’s Participation

Effective children’s participation is time consuming process in which girls and boys are given space to express their views on matters that concern them. Children’s participation in practice means supporting children to form groups in their local communities, within their schools or in other settings so that they can come together and talk about real issues that affect them. To begin with, support from community adults is important to create space for children to express their views within their communities and to build local ownership of their participation initiatives. Local child focused non-government organizations (NGOs) often take on the role of facilitators to prepare adults (for example, parents, community and religious leaders, teachers) to take children and their views seriously. Adult support and guidance is also important to help children assert their rights. Children can be supported to build their capacity to speak out (to lose their ‘fear’ of participating), to analyze issues of importance to them and to take appropriate action (see Box 6).

Examples of children’s participation are many and varied and include, among others: action in support of the right to education for out of school children; preventing violence in school through the establishment of school committees, action around protection issues including reporting on violations of their rights, action against violence and sexual abuse and early marriages and support to and care for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Through their own and adult-supported initiatives children can undertake awareness-raising on discrimination and punishment including issues such as the right to education, protection and health. Providing children with a regular space to organize their own groups and initiatives can enhance children’s confidence and skills to identify, analyze and initiate action and advocacy initiatives around concerns affecting their security and protection. Through their collective initiatives children are also in a stronger position to negotiate with adults with regard to any roles that are inappropriate or damaging to their age and development.

Box 6: Challenges of Children’s Participation

Challenges	Explanations
Excuse to Offload Responsibility	Sometimes participation is used as an excuse to offload on to children responsibility that should be borne by adult caregivers and service providers. Safe and effective participation generally requires a good deal of support.
Identify and Minimize Potential Risks	In unstable political environments, adults must work hard to identify and minimize potential risks arising from children’s participation in organized activities.
Reluctance to Curtail Authority	Maintaining power relations between adults and the children is not always a comfortable process and many “participatory projects” fail to fulfill their promise due to the reluctance of adults to curtail their authority.
Require Flexibility	Meaningfully engagement as partners or collaborators requires flexibility on the part of adult facilitators with regard to timing, process and outcomes.
Risk of Open Discussions	In displaced settings, encouraging open group discussions might lead to the revelation of information that can put individual children, their families or the entire community at risk. Adults may often feel unable to voice their ideas and concerns freely and without fear. Therefore, it is likely that they will fail to appreciate or will even actively oppose the creation of opportunities for children to speak up.
Fail to Take Account of Power Relations	Participatory activities can end up being dominated by a few relatively privileged or forceful individuals whose views carry excessive weight. These might be children with particular skills, a higher level of education or those whose families are more powerful or economically better off. The result for other children could be alienation, sense of inadequacy or the reinforcement of low self-esteem.
Not Fully Embrace Spirit of Participation	If adults involved do not fully embrace spirit of participation, children can end up disappointed and demoralized. Self-confidence of children can be adversely affected by a so-called ‘participatory’ project that turns out not to be such.

IV. Children's Perspectives on Displacement and Participation

In the following paragraphs, the children's perspectives on living in displaced camps and practical examples of children's participation in different activities carried out under Child Rights and You (CRY) supported project have been presented. The project recognized the importance of listening to children's perspectives on displaced livings, the practical ways in which children participate to enhance their own protection and improve environment of their community, and respond to the roles and responsibilities of children and support and help to strengthen their own protection and development initiatives, and promote their inclusion in community development processes.

i. Results of Focus Group Discussions and Participatory Appraisals

Displacement is one of the most visible and disruptive effects of armed conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. Children are forced to move with their families to unknown places that often offer harsher living conditions than those they had at home. In Jammu region, displacement has become a problem that has spanned about two decades. In some cases, parents of displaced children were at one time displaced children themselves. All of the displaced non-Kashmiri families living in camps are linked in one way or another to the ongoing armed conflict. Most of them had fled their homes during fighting or the threat of it. When the attacks developed, they did not always have sufficient warning to relocate, so they quickly gathered what they could and moved to a shelter outside of the affected area, be that a camp, a makeshift site, the homes of family or friends. They move because of insurgents' operations in their areas that created a general feeling of insecurity.

In some cases, the villagers are able to check on the status of the area and return when it is safe, but in others the displacement became prolonged to the extent that their homes are virtually abandoned. Fighting is frequently between two armed groups – non-state and state armed actors, but at times villages are targeted for attacks. Some of the displaced population fled when their homes are burned, though they could not always identify the perpetrator. Other than the direct fighting or attacks on villages, the effects of armed conflict also pushed villagers out of their homes. Displacement has deleterious effects on their key economic assets – land, tools, livestock, and seeds and they are forced to take shelter in the camps or other safer places. In most cases, children accompanied extended families.

Most of them have been displaced between 80 km to 150 km. The people also did not want to be too far away so that they could check on their houses and farms during suitable times. Fathers or elderly members often returned to look after houses that were left or to check their crops to see if they were damaged or not. Many households had experienced multiple moves before arriving at their current location. Some families had moved from site to site before eventually ending in the present camp. Displacement was often of short duration but frequent. Initially, they would flee the villages to the forest or other safer places when a militant group came into their area or at the onset of fighting, and then move back to their homes after they felt it was safe. Some of them experienced infrequent moves. The duration of displacement varied from household to household. Most of them had been displaced since the mid-1990s when violence erupted in hills of Doda, Rajouri, Poonch, Reasi and Udhampur. A total of 905 households are residing in three major displaced non-Kashmiri camps viz. Belicharana (284 households), Khanpur (215 households), and Talwara (406 households). Children of displaced families have suffered excessive damages on account of lack of access to education and healthcare, psycho-social problems, and loss of livelihood assets of their families.

a. Impact on health status: Water scarcity is high because of irregular supplies. Mosquitoes are found throughout the camps in summer and rainy seasons because of poor drainage and sanitary conditions. Malaria fever has also been a serious problem affecting children. Access to regular sources of food is limited. Government and sometimes local NGOs provided the camps' residents with food assistance. Majority of the families are living in a small room with no separate kitchen and bathroom. Due to lack of proper sanitation and drainage, camp dwellers are defecating and bathing in open, in the nearby river, nallas or in grassy areas around their shelter. Most common symptoms of poor health reported by children are simple colds, fever, cough, and headache – all likely due to communicable and preventable diseases. Diarrhea is very common in summer and rainy seasons. They have a high incidence of skin rashes. The congestion, heat, lack of ventilation, lack of safe water, lack of medicines, poor vector control and chaotic conditions have increased children's susceptibility to illness. Access to healthcare was an issue before the conflict and displacement too; however, accessibility to healthcare facilities has improved in physical terms, but is limited in financial terms.

b. Psychosocial impact: Displaced living often has a negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of children. It has caused children to feel great pain, grief, and fear. Some children have lost interest in their daily activities and often refused to go to school and are prone to pick fights with their classmates. Some children have also lost their self-confidence and self-esteem. Some children have felt that fear affected them physically. They shared that they have suffered from head and stomachaches, trembling, palpitations, and muscle pains more frequently. Physical symptoms of psychosocial distress are not uncommon. The insecure environment and fear have contributed to this effect. Children did not have enough space to play. Lack of space, cleanliness, and sanitation system has made the children very uncomfortable. Recreational and informal community gatherings are also affected. The parents did not have time to relax anymore as most of their time is spent to earn a livelihood.

c. Impact on access to education: Displacement has proved disruptive to children's education in several ways. Displaced children have faced challenges that resulted in part due to their social and economic status and in part because of their isolated location. Like health facilities, although the presence of education facilities has increased, children, however, were not always able to access them due to financial constraints. While tuition at the government-run primary school level is free, parents in many cases must cover the cost of several subsidiary fees, such as school materials and uniforms. Because displaced families usually were unable to select the location of their shelter, they were not always proximate to a school. They were forced into marginal area where communities had not yet been established and therefore were not conveniently linked to the mainstream education system.

d. Impact on livelihood opportunities: Most of the conflict-affected displaced households were primarily agricultural. The displacement was accompanied by a considerable shift away from the agricultural sector into other fields. This meant a move from farming into labour, but also led to higher unemployment. Majority of camps' dwellers reported themselves as having been farmers previously, but afterwards, a large proportion of them are unemployed due to lack of skill and trainings. This does not mean, however, that people do not work. They have to travel a long distance to reach nearby towns to find manual work.

e. Coping strategies: Displaced households have not in some circumstances sought to rebuild or restore what they lost. The feeling of uncertainty that peace will hold and they will return to their native villages compel them not to invest in long-term socio-economic activities. Some displaced families took up new jobs such as manual workers, dhaba workers, domestic workers, chowkidars, factory workers, drivers, workshop helpers, etc. Displaced women and children are also reportedly seeking work and engaged in all types of hazardous tasks. Women and child

trafficking has also been reported. Due to nearness to the army area, national highway, tourist spots and city, it is possible that some women and girls would have been trafficked into or forced to enter into the commercial sex. Some of the areas from where people fled are zones where poppy and marijuana are grown and where increasingly other types of narcotics are produced. It is likely that some displaced children were involved in the transport of narcotics.

Some women along with their children resorted to begging and dependence on charity where alternative sources of employment hard to come by. Children are forced in to begging to survive and supplement family earnings. Some children work alone, meaning that they beg alone, but some work under close coordination of their mothers or elder sister or brother or other children. They use a part of the money they receive by themselves, mostly on smoking and intoxicants; rest of the money is handed over to the parents or senior member of the households. Those who work alone are subjected to abuse by miscreant mainly fellow children, camp dwellers, roadside vendors, workshop workers, dhaba workers and transport workers. While those who begged in groups mainly with mothers and other family members are in general tended to be safe. Some displaced people relied on aid from a variety of sources. Some NGOs had been helping them identify sources of aid from the government because not everyone knew what was available or how to access it. Another strategy some families adopted was to sell their valuables in the hope that they would be able to bridge hard times with this money. Some displaced families have risked return to their home areas over the period. Those who returned often lived with continued instability and threats. This coping strategy placed people at considerable risk, since those same areas were still under continued insurgency and many of the returnees have faced the consequences too.

ii. Results of Baseline Survey

a. Demographic Characteristics: Nearly 48% of displaced families belong to disadvantaged groups viz. scheduled castes (SCs): 22.98% and scheduled tribes (STs): 24.20%. Before coming to the camps, some of the male head of the households have been killed by the armed militants in their native villages, while some of them migrated to other towns and cities to eke out a livelihood, thus, shifting the burden of head of the households on the female member of the households. In the displaced camps, 10.24% of females are shouldering the responsibilities of head of households in Belicharana followed by 6.69% in Khanpur (Nagrota) and 5.66% in Talwara. In such households, females are suffering multiple burden of separation of head of households due to killing, migration, living in camps and managing daily household chores and feeding themselves and their family members including children, taking care of children's education, health and wellbeing. The young women are also at the risk of abuse by the other members of the households, relatives and fellow male inmates of the camps.

On average, there are 2.77 adults per household with significant variations across camps (2.84 adults, 2.61 adults and 2.86 adults per household respectively in Belicharana, Khanpur and Talwara). More number of adults implies more earning members per households. However, due to lack of economic opportunities in the camps and its surroundings, the unemployment and underemployment is reportedly very high. Almost all the households are living in abject conditions of poverty and deprivation. There are 3.19 children per household, and, the child-adult ratio stood at 1.15. About 31% of the children are in the adolescent age group of 13-17 years, 42.48% in the age group 6-13 years and more than one-fifth (22.91%) in the childhood age group 1-5 years and 0.026% of them are infants (below 12 months). Child sex ratio is estimated at 0.97 female per male child. More than two-third (68.09%) of the children are born after displacement and they have seen camp life throughout their childhood and deprived of the basic civic amenities like proper schooling, health, drinking water, hygiene and sanitation. A higher proportion of the children in the adolescent age group have its own repercussions in terms of their needs for higher

education, training, health, and recreation, which is virtually absent in all camps. In the absence of these facilities, their energies and potentialities may go waste and they may indulge in bad habits and be abused by the bad elements in and outside the camps. The adolescent male children may get trapped in drug abuse and stealing and form rogue bands, whereas their female counterparts may be lured into sexual abuse. Thus, there is an urgent need to open avenues for their active involvement in training and skill development so that their energies and potentialities can be channelized in the right perspective for their better growth and development. Likewise for the children in the age group below 13 years, the provisioning of adequate education and health is a must for their proper growth. The available education and health facilities are very meager, which needs to be supplemented by the government and non-government efforts.

b. Unemployment: Nearly 39% of the adult population are economically active and termed as employed and of them 93.79% are male and the rest are female. Most of the women are seeking work outside the homes and camps. In Khanpur (Nagrota), the poor women from disadvantaged communities along with their children resort to begging on particular days (Saturdays and Tuesdays) by visiting the nearby townships of Jammu, Nagrota and Katra. However, such a pattern was not reported in the other two camps. About 60% of the working age population is unemployed in the three camps. The unemployed female population is very high and stood at 94.91%. The proportion of the unemployed population in Belicharana camp stood at 51.06%, 64.01% in Khanpur (Nagrota) and 64.19% in Talwara camp. In Belicharana camp, the proportion of the unemployed population is comparatively low, which is due to the fact that the camp is located on the fringe of Jammu city and both the male and female population has easy access to nearby industrial estates, bus stand, ware houses, shops and establishments wherein they find manual wage employment on a temporary basis. However, more males than females are employed in Belicharana. In the other two camps, the male unemployment rate is quite significant and stood at 30.32% (Khanpur) and 72.11% (Talwara). Thus, the incidence of unemployment is very high in these two camps, which is collaborated with the poor economic conditions. Even those who are employed are earning a very small amount, given the nature of manual wage employment they are engaged in. Overall, the unemployment and underemployment is quite alarming among the displaced population living in these camps and they should be made aware of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) so that at least 100 days of employment could be provided to them.

c. Economic Conditions: More than 96% of households belong to the category of below poverty line (BPL). Majority of BPL households do not possess BPL card and are not getting subsidized ration from the public distribution system (PDS). In Talwara camp, more than two-thirds of the BPL households possess BPL card and all of them are getting subsidized ration. It appears that the displaced population of Talwara camp is comparatively more aware politically and opts for pressurizing the local administration in providing them the minimum basic necessities. They were also the first in the category of non-Kashmiri displaced population who got the food and financial assistance from the government and shown the way to others in Khanpur (Nagrota) and Belicharana) to get the basic minimum relief and assistance.

Initially they were not given any aid and assistance by the government and they were not considered as displaced population by the government agencies and deprived of any assistance as being given to Kashmiri migrants from the valley of Kashmir. Recently, with the constant and vigorous efforts made by the non-governmental agencies and social activists, they are now being also given cash and financial assistance. To begin with, such assistance was given to the displaced households residing in Talwara camp only, however, with constant pressure on the government by the social activists and the groups of displaced populations living in the other two camps, the households living in Khanpur (Nagrota) and Belicharana are also being given food and financial assistance, which has eased their livings considerably. Recently, there were reports

of selling of children from Talwara camp to nearby states of Punjab and Haryana. As the matter has been highlighted by the civil society, the fresh incidence of selling of children has not come to the limelight. However, the incidence of child labour as domestic servants, dhaba workers, rag pickers, beggars, manual workers, workshop workers, vendors' helpers, etc is reportedly high.

d. Age at marriage: Marriage before the age of 18 is a reality for many young girls living in the camps. In displaced situations, parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children in hopes that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family. In actuality, child marriage is a violation of human rights, compromising the development of girls and often resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational training reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty. Due to prevalent cultural practices and traditions, displaced households are not adhering to the legal age at marriage. More than 18% of the households marry their daughter before the age of 18 years and 10% of marriages of boys took place before the legal age of 21 years.

The low age at marriage for girls is due to poor economic conditions and prevalent socio-cultural practices of marrying daughter at puberty. Besides, displacement and living in camp situations does not provide a sense of security to the girls because of lack of opportunities to engage in education and training and productive activities. The threat of sexual abuse of these young girls within and outside camps also looms large on the parents and in order to avoid such threats they marry their daughters at an early age. The young boys with poor economic conditions and improper education and trainings indulge in anti-social activities like theft, stealing, drugs, gangs, etc. The parents due to lack of awareness, in the pretext of setting them right, tied them in marriage knot, which ultimately results in more poverty, large number of children, frustration, domestic violence, divorce, and so on.

e. Child Survival: The system of institutional deliveries and birth registration is poor. In case of institutional birth, the health professionals themselves have reported the birth to concerned agency for registration. Nearly one-half of recent births have been registered in Panchayat records. In case of home birth, some of the families find it difficult to register on time due to lack of awareness, preoccupation with daily household chores and livelihood activities. Some of the parents may even wait until it is necessary for their children to have formal identification, for example, prior to attending school. Proportionately, more male births (47.22%) than female births (13.33%) have been registered. Thus, there is gender bias in birth registration. Even in cases where birth has been registered, in most cases birth certificates has not been issued. Birth registration levels are higher among children who attend early childhood education than those who do not. However, the proportion of such children is very small. Awareness-raising campaigns can help to reduce the numbers of children without birth registration. Improving mothers' knowledge and education might benefit birth registration rates.

Immunization of children against preventable diseases is very low. Only 51.28% of the new born children (28.57% and 77.77% of girls and boys respectively) have immunized completely. Nearly, 31% of the children (33.23% and 28.70% of boys and girls respectively) in the age group of 1-5 years have been completely immunized. Thus, there are gender disparities in immunization of children. The comparatively high proportion of immunization in Belicharana camp has been due to nearness to the Jammu city, better transport and communication and visit of health professionals and members of voluntary organizations to the camp. Besides, the parents are more mobile and have regular contacts with urban counterparts and are thus aware about the need for child immunization. Displacement and poverty, lack of education, knowledge and awareness, poor accessibility, no visit of health workers, etc are responsible for non-immunization and poor immunization of children in Khanpur and Talwara camps. Those of the women who immunized themselves during pregnancy also tend to immunized their children and vice versa. The

proportion of more immunization of pregnant women has been reported in Belicharana camp than other two camps. Besides, the place of deliveries has been cited as one of the reasons for immunization or non-immunization. If the child has been delivered in the institutional care, the child born as well as the mother is subjected to immunization compared to non-institutional deliveries. Talwara and Khanpur camps are isolated and deprived of basic health facilities, which needs to be improved so that both the children as well as the pregnant women could be immunized against the preventable diseases.

f. Child Development: Upon displacement, the first toll the children experience was that of lack of educational facilities resulting in high drop outs. They have to travel up to more than 5 km to reach a school. The enrolment of children above 6 years in educational system is quite low and stood at 52.18%. The proportion of children enrolled in schools in the three camps stood at 66.21% in Belicharana, 63.40% in Khanpur (Nagrota) and 36.07% in Talwara. Comparatively high enrollment in Belicharana is due to the fact of nearness to the city of Jammu and availability of private educational institutions in the camp itself. About 53% of male children and 51% of the female children of age group 6 plus are enrolled in educational institutions. All this paints a very ugly picture of enrolment of children in educational system, which is far behind the national goal of education for all. Some of the children below the age of 6 years are also attending the private schools besides NFE centres under the CRY funded project and anganwadi centres under ICDS. However, due to lack of awareness and motivation on the part of parents and abject poverty conditions, they could not send their children to schools. The government-run educational institutions are lacking and if available these schools are without proper infrastructure including teachers. In the government run schools the teachers are quite irregular and not taking interests in teaching the students, which results in high drop outs. Distance to better managed private and government run schools is also reasons for low enrolment. Non-enrollment and drop outs are very high. Thus, there is need to provide basic education along with technical and vocational skills to these children so that they could grown up as well literate and skilled to enter the labour market and eke out a livelihood to support their families economically.

g. Child Protection: Before displacement also, children have contributed to family welfare in a variety of ways in agriculture and animal husbandry tasks, besides collecting fuel and fodder, fetching water, and looking after young siblings. But displacement has broken the traditional economic systems and even earning basic subsistence becomes more precarious, which put children at ever higher risk. Gender is another central factor. Girls are expected to be primarily or exclusively domestic workers, so household work at young ages is regarded as natural for them. Besides, domestic works within four walls they are actively engaged in remunerative work as domestic servants outside the households. In addition, displaced camps are threatening places for girls, where they are at risk of sexual harassment from close relatives, neighbours, outsiders and others. Solely by virtue of their gender, therefore, many girls are pushed into exploitative labour. Commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in children for prostitution is also not ruled out and needs deeper probes to understand the nature and extent of the problem.

Nearly 38% of out of school children above 6 years and below 14 years are engaged in different remunerative occupations outside the home. None of the children is engaged in home based occupations as their parents are lacking money, skill and trainings to take up any home based enterprises. The reasons cited for high proportion of child labour are displaced living conditions, acute poverty, and lack of education and availability of child specific work nearby the camps. Due to inadequate earnings and aid and assistance, the children are forced into child labour, which is depriving them of basic human rights. As such, it can be addressed by enforcing the minimum working-age regulations and protecting children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

iii. Experiences and Benefits of Children's Participation

CRY project activities in all the three non-Kashmiri displaced camps viz. Talwara, Khanpur (Nagrota) and Belicharana have promoted children's groups for sharing information among children on education, health, nutrition and livelihood issues. The formation of children's groups has resulted in children's participation in child protection and child right concerns. Children's groups have advocated the child rights and basic life skills among the children, adults and community members. These groups have focused on community, sports, cultural, literary, and recreational activities. Children's groups have raised awareness on education for girls. The members of the groups have motivated street children to go to school and spread messages to stop child labour, substance abuse including drugs, sexual abuse and harassment. They have raised awareness regarding HIV/AIDS and early marriages.

a. Children's Participation in Governance: The adult facilitators have helped establish mechanisms for children participation by forming and promoting children's groups using participatory activities to explore important development issues. The participatory sessions with children have helped them identify the problems, causes and potential solutions to their problems. Children's groups have been strengthened to conduct weekly meetings with children in displaced camps. Children's participation in child rights advocacy, life skills development and community development have been encouraged.

b. Children's Participation in Programming: Adult facilitators have developed mechanisms to involve young children in their own programming. Children's groups are mechanisms whereby children can speak, share ideas and develop programmes, while they also monitor and review. It enables children's participation in decision-making and programme initiatives and developments. Children's participation in programming remains experimental. They participated in baseline survey and participatory situational analysis, programme design, planning and implementation. Adult facilitators have had initial success in facilitating children's participation in programming. Members of the children's groups have played a key role in all stages of planning, implementing and reviewing their action programmes.

c. Children's Participation in Identification of Problems: The participatory mapping processes have enabled children's groups to identify positive aspects and problems in their camps. Through participatory mapping exercises, they have identified prevalent problems in the community, which includes substance abuse, sexual abuse and harassment of girls, child labour, poor sanitation, lack of toilets, bad water, bad roads, lack of health services, poor educational facilities, food insecurity and malnutrition, and absence of out of school activities. Children's groups have also prioritized the problems in their camps and undertook a thorough analysis of prioritized problems and explored how they could begin addressing the problems using awareness campaigns among the communities and local leadership and encouraging discussions among children in schools and communities.

d. Children's Participation in Advocacy Efforts: Children's groups are involved in advocacy efforts on issues affecting children. Through children's groups, young children learn about their communities in active and meaningful ways. Collaboration between children, family members and community members has increased. Through their motivation, many children have returned to school. Children are also using creative methods, like posters, street plays and house-to-house visits, to raise awareness and change practices on various health and social issues with adults in the community. The success depends on how much children have been involved in developing the advocacy messages and/or how much they agree with them.

e. Children's Participation in Action Research: Young children have been involved in participatory action research in the displaced camps. The project organized capacity building programmes on child focused participatory research for adult facilitators followed by participatory research with children, and report writing and sharing and dissemination. The research with children highlighted many policy and programme issues relating to education, health, child marriage, child abuse and children's participation.

f. Benefits of Children's Participation: The members of children's groups have benefited from capacity building opportunities in child rights, communication and negotiation skills. Children's Groups are creating opportunity for girls and boys by creating platform for child participation. Adult facilitators have helped in building capacities of children on child rights and giving freedom to children to put their rights into practice. The members of children's groups felt that they had gained considerably from participatory interventions such as information sharing about their rights; street plays, speeches and awareness campaigns on child rights and basic life skills education. With improved capacities, they had raised various issues such as pre-and-post child birth health care, birth registration, school enrolment, child abuse, child marriage and trafficking, health and sanitation (e.g. vaccinations, diarrhea) with other children and community groups. They felt that their participation had brought about much change locally. The children learned that they had their own views and they were increasingly recognized within the family and community as people with opinions and suggestions.

Girl children have identified unsafe places and sought support and protection from community adults to create safer places in their neighbourhood. This activity was undertaken due to rise in incidence of sexual abuse and harassments to girls by outsiders. Initially the girls were supported to identify the places in their community that they felt were unsafe for them. The girls collected evidence of harassment and the impacts on them. The girls developed recommendations to make these places safer and then used them to negotiate with key persons including community leadership to make the spaces safer for girls. The girls also provided support to other girls who have suffered abuse or harassment to make sure that they were not made to feel guilty or isolated. Such peer support was crucial in helping to rebuild self-esteem, confidence and morale.

Over time, experience and understanding of children's participation have considerably increased and the children have managed to overcome or minimize many of the initial challenges and have achieved some positive outcomes. Members of children's groups have learned about child rights and basic life skills. They have learned how children can participate in resolving family and community problems. They value collective thinking and working together, rather than acting as individuals. Adult facilitators have supported children in identifying and analyzing problems and finding solutions.

V. Lessons Learnt from Children's Participation

There are many practical issues and challenges involved in promoting children's participation in displaced settings. The need for good preparation and awareness to anticipate possible risks of children's participation beforehand and have strategies to deal with them is not over-emphasized. At the beginning, a framework to ensure ethical, meaningful and inclusive children's participation should be established. This is possible by developing child-friendly information and participatory tools such as poetry, drama, and songs; making sure that children have the space to express their own views and ensuring that adults do not dominate, dictate or manipulate these views; exploring discrimination and ensuring non-discrimination; ensuring child protection issues appropriately and sensitively; ensuring children face no harm as a result of their participation; and ensuring wider accountability and preparing adults to acknowledge the capacities of children, and to respond and act upon them. Additional efforts may be required to encourage groups of children

who typically suffer discrimination - non-school-going children or children with different abilities/disabilities - to have equal opportunities to be involved. Children themselves should be encouraged to reflect on who is included in, and excluded from, their participatory protection and development initiatives.

i. Children's Top Concerns in Promoting Participation

The initial phases of developing children's groups presented challenges. A general lack of support from parents was an obstacle to the children's participation and the children had no meeting place. The children struggled to find time for children's groups activities while attending school and extra tuition classes, and wanting some free time to play. The cultural barriers also made it difficult for the children to encourage parents to let their daughters attend the children's groups.

Children often play a vital role in the enhancement of their own protection and good participatory projects can facilitate this further. The main motive of children's participation is to ensure that their own experiences, concerns and aspirations have bearing upon the decisions taken that affect their lives. In displaced settings, young children have to play expanded roles and responsibilities. However, it must be ensured that individual children are not exposed to undue risk. If such risk appears likely then it may be necessary to consider how the views and concerns of children can be represented without their direct involvement in person. In whichever way it is achieved, the benefits from establishing functional linkage between child-led initiatives and the institutions and processes of governance need to be understood and explored further.

The accountability of adult facilitators to children's concerns and priorities is required to ensure the fulfillment of children's rights to protection, participation, development and survival. Adult facilitators have responsibilities to protect children's rights and their accountability is reflected in increasing opportunities for listening to children, sharing information, and providing feedback to children about how their views and recommendations have or have not been addressed.

The development of comprehensive child protection systems, including the formation of child protection committees in communities would also enhance holistic, sustainable efforts towards children's care, protection and participation. Young children should be supported to form their own groups and initiatives so that they can identify and address key protection issues affecting them, and elect their own representatives to be part of the protection committees. Capacity-building initiatives with children on child rights and basic life skills, conflict resolution, organizational development and peace-building could also be scaled up to support the strengthening of child-led organizations and initiatives.

Children's groups are desirous of establishing a network of such groups in other displaced camps to share their experiences. They are also anxious to develop better relations with local government functionaries so that their rights could be addressed in a serious manner. Children's groups are keen to find solutions to the challenges of displacement including livelihoods and survival with the support and interventions of authorities at higher levels, for which they need further capacity building on communication skills to be taken more seriously by adults. The young children are keen in raising some funds to increase their access to new technologies, training and information like computer literacy and internet and to start out of school programmes like basic literacy, tuition, sports and cultural activities. Besides, fostering children's participation beyond data gathering, participatory monitoring and evaluation would promote self-reliance in decision-making and problem-solving, strengthening children's capacities to take action and bring about change. As children gain experience and exposure through participating in consultation and decision-making processes, their skills and knowledge as trainers and facilitators on child rights and children's participation should be recognized.

ii. Promoting Children's Participation in Local Governance

To create an enabling environment for children's participation in governance, there is need to strengthen their involvement in the decision-making processes of schools, organizations and local governance. The mobilization and organization of children's groups and promoting their networks would increase their negotiation and bargaining powers with local administration. Through power base of their organizations, children's groups and their networks will demand effective delivery of basic services like education, health, water and sanitation, integrated child care services and basic infrastructure. To make their groups and networks robust, these should be given representative space in local governance structures (e.g. panchayat raj institutions, village development committees and village education committees). The authorities of local governance should acknowledge the children's groups capacity to contribute to local development processes and provide structural space for children's representatives to raise issues and to influence and monitor decision-making, resource allocation and action on issues relating to the fulfillment of their rights.

Children's participation in governance should strengthen the process of empowering children's groups and provide political space for children to be heard. Enabling children's participation in governance requires that local authorities should share some of the power, create space in their structures and take children's views seriously.

iii. Promoting Children's Participation in Programming

Realizing the importance of children's participation in all stages of programming, capacity building sessions on children's participation should be organized for adult facilitators enabling them to facilitate space and opportunities for children's participation in all areas of decision-making. Children's participation in programming should focus on the following activities: (a) education - influencing the management and running schools; (b) life skill education - getting feedback in designing curriculum; (c) vocational training - selecting trades and managing training centres; (d) income generation programme - selecting beneficiaries; (e) alternative support - organizing child fairs and competitions for children; (f) awareness generation - forming children's groups and involving community based organizations on issues of child rights, abuse and rehabilitation; (g) advocacy - involving children's groups in community consultations and sensitizing adult duty bearers by sharing their experiences; and (h) evaluation - selecting criterion for analyzing programme impact.

iv. Promoting Children's Participation in Development Policy and Programmes

The following suggestions should be considered in promoting children's participation in the development of child focused policy and programmes: (a) involve children from the start and encourage their involvement throughout the process; (b) provide all the relevant information on children's issues in simple language; (c) use 'child-friendly' approaches to encourage children's participation; (d) be open about resources that are available to support the process; (e) ensure all young children as part of the processes, including marginalized children; (f) make the process of children's participation as fair and honest as possible; (g) make sure that the adult facilitators are trained in child rights and know how to support children's participation; (h) children need to know more about how programmes work and how they can contact the right people – who, where and how?; (i) make sure that all children know about available channels of communication; (j) remember to deliver on commitments; (k) allow follow up on consultations to let them know next actions and progress made; (l) moral and financial support for children to stay involved; (m) training of adults facilitators to give them the confidence and skills to encourage children's involvement; (n) supporting peer (child-led) research to produce evidence to support children's

advocacy; (o) producing child friendly versions of key documents; and (p) follow up on government promises and hold governments accountable.

VI. Conclusions

Young children living amidst armed conflict and displacement are often at risk from frustration, isolation and hopelessness. They have a potentially vital role to play in enhancing their own protection and that of their peers, especially when regular family and community life has been disrupted. Children's participation in social action that empowers them to better protect themselves should, therefore, be considered as an emergency measure, and not as an option to be explored when circumstances improve. In displaced settings, children's participation in social action and programming should be operationalized by taking into account the following suggestions: (a) develop a sound understanding of socio-cultural conditions, especially with respect to the involvement of the young children in social action and decision-making processes; (b) start any project through baseline survey undertaken together with children and other community members; (c) ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children and adult facilitators remains the primary concern at all times; (d) be prepared to suspend activities or make alterations in light of changing circumstances; (e) adopt a gradual approach to the development of activities and allowing time to gain trust and confidence as children begin to articulate their ideas and build a solid network; (f) open up the space for children's participation by gaining the understanding and support of parents and community members; (g) develop close collaboration between community and local agencies, since they have a complimentary role to play in ensuring the success and safety of participatory projects and facilitating the efforts of children to make contact with governmental and other bodies; (h) provide adult facilitators and children with ongoing need-based training activities to build their capacity; (i) encourage children to take responsibility at every possible opportunity and in each stage of the programming; (j) offer continuous support to children's activities through community based resource persons, ready to advise and assist when requested; and (k) link existing child-led projects to the wider context of civil society and local governance.

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