

FACES OF TRAUMA AND VIOLENCE

In the opening section of this document, we have discussed the extent of the problem. Now it is time to take a close look at the real and agonizing impact violence and trauma have on our children. Because there are many different types of violence and trauma, the resulting pain has many faces:

- The agonized face of a child soldier who has been forced from his home and made to kill for a cause he doesn't understand;
- The forlorn face of the refugee child, disenfranchised and sometimes orphaned, who struggles in a camp far from a familiar home;
- The scared face of a child who sees her mother battered or her own hopes shattered by abuse from those she trusted;
- The angry face of a child whose games and TV make him believe that might is right and leave him with few skills for negotiating resolutions without violence;
- The teary face of an adolescent girl kidnapped to be the “wife” of a military commander; and
- The frightened face of a child who can no longer play outside her home because her neighborhood is filled with violence.

Violence and trauma can affect children drastically, even if they are only witnesses to the violence. Some of these effects are:

Fear	Withdrawal
Anger	Confusion
Haunting memories	Digestive problems
Depression	Nightmares
Avoiding people	Avoiding activities
Trouble concentrating	Sleep problems

Children may also revert to behaviors they grew out of years ago or may cry more easily. Adolescents may become more aggressive or begin to use drugs or alcohol to feel better. In some cases, the effects are lingering and powerful. Some children and adolescents develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other mental illnesses that damage their lives, as well as negatively affect their ability to raise their own children effectively.

In this section, we will focus on different forms of trauma and violence against children and adolescents. First, we will describe the problem, then describe its developmental impact on children, and finally offer hope with strategies for successful interventions.

The three forms of trauma and violence we will cover are broken down into the following categories:

- (1) Domestic (or family) abuse and community violence;
- (2) War and refugees (fleeing from war or natural disasters); and
- (3) Violence in the media.

“I think that to have a better world, all children must be able to play, to have fun, smile, the poorest too because life is made especially by children.”

Naima Borgese, 11
Italy