

SPECIAL PROTECTIONS
COMMENTARY



No age of innocence: Justice for children

Lisbet Palme

Whether due to government paternalism or to simple disregard for their rights, juveniles who come into conflict with the law often face justice systems that treat them capriciously and offer fewer protections than they offer adults. Children in many countries face the wrath of the law for the 'crimes' of being poor, neglected or abused. Regardless of the reasons for their offences, young people are entitled to fair treatment at the hands of juvenile justice systems that are designed to aid youngsters' return to productive society as quickly as possible.

No one can question the notion that children are entitled to the fundamental necessities of life: love and nurturance, food and shelter, health care and education. But the understanding and acceptance of another fundamental entitlement—due process of law—is harder to come by. Few countries take seriously a young person's right to fair treatment at the hands of the justice system; few adults even realize that juve-

niles have this right. When young people come into conflict with the law, instead of finding compassion and help, they often face harsh punishment, and without the legal protections that adults have.

Sometimes young offenders are penalized just as if they were adults, with the maturity and experience to distinguish between right and wrong on a grown-up level. Sometimes they face even worse: Adults must be accused of breaking the law before they can be legally detained, but in

many countries a judge can put children in jail simply because of 'irregular conduct'—they are dirty or are sleeping on the street or have lost their identity papers.

Sometimes the authorities put a benevolent face on the punishment, incarcerating children 'for their own protection'. In India, for example, police can apprehend young people if they are "likely to be abused or exploited for immoral or illegal purposes or wrongful gains"—in other words, any child who is poor is liable to be victimized by the criminal system in the name of altruism.

And sometimes juveniles in detention are abused physically and sexually, in some cases even tortured, by those who are supposed to guard them.

This treatment is inhumane, and it is inconsistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and has been ratified by all but three countries on earth (Cook Islands, Somalia and the United States). When young people come into conflict with the law, they need help, not retribution.

I was only 20 years old when I started to work for and with children in detention. My experience over the years has only strengthened my conviction that we must develop juvenile justice systems

that are compassionate and rational. Our children are entitled to fair treatment, and society as a whole will benefit when they receive it.

Injustice to juveniles

Let us be clear about this: Juveniles are being subjected to grave injustices at every moment in countries around the globe. In Jamaica, children as young as 10 are held for indeterminate periods of time, often with adults, in dank detention cells. In Egypt, children who work as prostitutes are not only sexually exploited for commercial purposes but are criminalized and also face harsher penalties than adult sex workers. In Rwanda, youngsters below the country's age of criminal responsibility (14) are imprisoned in connection with the nation's recent genocide.

In Australia, aboriginal children are incarcerated at 18 times the rate of non-aboriginals. In Sudan, children are subject to punishments that include flogging, amputation and execution. In Kenya, up to 120 children a week find themselves in Nairobi's juvenile court for the 'crime' of being homeless. The majority of children in the West Bank who are sentenced according to Israeli security laws have no legal right to a lawyer.

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In just the past 15 years, nine countries are known to have put offenders to death for crimes they committed as juveniles. In the US, 137 juveniles have been sentenced to death since 1973, and nine of them have been executed for crimes committed when they were under 18. While China has outlawed capital punishment for children under 18, in practice 16-year-olds can be sentenced to death—although the sentence is suspended until they reach 18.

Young people accused of heinous crimes comprise a tiny percentage of the juveniles who come into contact with the criminal justice system. The tragedy is that the great majority of juvenile offenders have committed minor crimes or are guilty of nothing at all. Many of those held in custody have not even been convicted—they are simply awaiting trial, sometimes for extremely long periods of time. In Lebanon, for instance, 90 per cent of incarcerated children are waiting to be tried, some for as long as two years.

The percentage of children who are in custody is one indication of how effectively countries are dealing with young offenders. In Italy, with a population of 57 million, about 650 juveniles are being detained on a typical day. But in the US, with a population just 5 times greater than Italy's, 150 times more children are detained—almost 100,000 young people. This wholesale locking away of young people cannot be justified on any terms.

Most countries take a passive attitude towards juvenile justice, as evident from the lack of accountability. Very few governments even keep track of how many children are involved with the criminal justice system. Any country's national statistics office can tell you the percentage of children who were born underweight, have been immunized, are enrolled in school. But ask what

percentage of children are incarcerated and in most cases you will receive no precise answer. How can we possibly be caring properly for our children if we lack such fundamental information?

Governments around the world have agreed to track statistics on child health and development as a way to support their children's progress. Governments must develop similar indicators about how their young people fare in the justice system. At a minimum, every country should know how many children are being held, for how long and why.

The roots of conflict

I believe fervently that youthful offenders are made, not born, and that the vast majority would not be made if troubled young people had the benefit of loving nurturance from supportive parents, schools (including pre-schools) and communities. When that support is wanting, they should come under the care of youth guidance authorities. Most children fall into conflict with the law because such assistance is simply not available or does not operate properly.

Impoverished young people experience society's linkage between poverty and crime from an early age. Many of them become involved with the police and the justice system simply because they appear poor or socially undesirable, or because they 'look' dangerous—not because they have broken any law.

You don't have to probe very far into the backgrounds of children who wind up in police stations and courtrooms to find a common denominator: poverty. In developing countries, poverty often forces children out of the house when they are as young as 10, sometimes even younger. They may never have had the opportunity to go to school, or may have attended irregularly or been 'pushed' out, their performance hindered by hunger or distance

from the school. Civil unrest may have forced them to flee their rural home for the city, where they arrived without papers and became separated from family members or friends.

At any rate, these young people are probably living on the street, where destitution may lead them to steal from a shop, pick someone's pocket or barter the only thing they own—their bodies—for survival.

In the industrialized countries, many young people are surrounded by wealth but live in deprivation, taunted by the unattainable riches of a consumer society. Growing up in neighbourhoods where every corner has its drug dealer, and lacking the role model of grown-ups who go to legitimate jobs every morning, some find it impossible to resist the temptation of the drug trade's easy money. Eventually the police catch up with them. That is often the start of a life in which they know their probation officers better than their teachers.

These children have been discarded by their families and their societies, and they hear that message loud and clear. With the gap between the rich and the poor continuing to grow, we can expect to see even more 'discarded' children in the coming years.

The US, with just 5 times the population of Italy, has 150 times more children in detention.

A decision by a police officer or a judge to detain a child on the basis of some vague infraction like vagrancy or suspicion of misconduct can expose him or her to callous injustice or to a system that is overloaded, uncaring and often designed for adults. When

poor children are accused of more serious crimes, they typically receive the inferior services of overworked lawyers—if they get any legal representation at all. Once stigmatized by a criminal record, these juveniles become scapegoats for the complex problems that adult society has been unable to solve.

On the other hand, some young people who should be handled by the justice system escape it altogether. In most societies, well-to-do parents can often make use of social connections to 'take care of' any charges brought against their children when they come into conflict with the law, even when the accusations are serious.

The first step towards ensuring fair justice for all juveniles is identifying the 'many'—those in need of social services—and separating them from the criminal justice system so it can function for the 'few'—the serious offenders. The involvement in the justice system of children whose only 'crime' is poverty also pads the juvenile crime statistics, which in turn inflame media accounts of marauding young offenders.

When responsibility begins

All countries have an age at which people become adults in the legal sense of the word—they can vote, sign legal contracts, marry. But the Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for countries to establish a minimum age below which young people "shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law"—in other words, an age below which they are too young to be responsible for their actions and therefore too young to face criminal sanctions.

But this age varies widely, and in many cases it is far too young: The age of criminal responsibility is 7 years in, for example, Bangladesh, India, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, Tanzania and Thailand. Under

common law, the age is also 7 in most US states. A child barely old enough to go to school cannot possibly have the maturity to understand the consequences of his or her behaviour. (See accompanying news story.)

Given that such young children can be subject to the penal code, it is all the more important that each country establish a humane and constructive juvenile justice system. Such a system is designed to deal with young offenders until they reach the age of adulthood. In an ideal world it serves as a safety net, catching children who commit petty offences and, instead of locking them away, helping them learn a sense of responsibility for their actions. The system should be based on knowledge of child development. At the same time, the juvenile justice system must protect society from potentially dangerous criminals.

In many countries, a few brutal, highly publicized crimes by young people have led to public demands to lower the age at which children are held criminally responsible. Government leaders must resist the temptation to reduce the juvenile justice system to a structure for retribution designed for the rare hardened child criminal. Glib slogans like 'Adult time for adult crime' betray the very people that society has failed and encourage 'warehousing' of juveniles—in prisons that in reality serve as training grounds for criminals.

Preventing juvenile crime

There is no question that preventing crime is preferable to punishing it. Never is that more true than in the case of juvenile delinquency, so often a cry for help from a troubled youngster.

The UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, known as the 'Riyadh Guidelines', recognize the importance of preventing young people from being stigmatized by the justice system.



The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that children who are deprived of their liberty, or incarcerated, be treated with humanity and respect for their dignity. This young boy is in a children's detention centre in Moscow.

The Guidelines call for the development of measures that "avoid criminalizing and penalizing a child for behaviour that does not cause serious damage to the development of the child or harm to others." This statement sends a profound message: Preventing juvenile delinquency or crime is not just a matter of protecting society—its aim is to help children overcome their misdeeds and fulfil their potential. It is also less costly and more efficient for society to prevent young people from starting on criminal careers than to pay for the outcome of criminal behaviour.

Many programmes have been established to help young people. In the Canadian province of Ontario, a Reasoning and Rehabilitation Project run by probation officers helps juveniles to modify impulsive behaviour and learn alternative responses to interpersonal problems. Recidivism has fallen dramatically among the

participants. In the Netherlands, Project HALT requires vandals to personally compensate their victims but in such a way that avoids stigmatizing them with the label of 'criminal'.

In Morocco, children's clubs in four cities offer recreational and cultural activities for urban children aged 7 to 12. The clubs also offer moral support and guidance to help young people remain in school.

The Philippines has a programme, begun in 1986, that focuses on substance abuse, sexual exploitation and children in conflict with the law. Active in 32 cities, it includes a range of activities to support street children and prevent juvenile delinquency. Belgium, Israel and the Netherlands all have a Children's Rights Shop where young people can find help for problems relating to the law and their rights.

Young people who commit

offences should bear the responsibility for their actions—but they must be held accountable in a manner appropriate to their level of maturity. Treating the few serious offenders fairly but firmly will take the heat off the many who are unfairly labelled as delinquents or worse.

Those who are found guilty need help to reintegrate into society, to develop opportunities leading to a meaningful life. They also need the best professional help that society can provide. The countries with the best juvenile justice records are those that keep contact between youth and the police, courts and jails to a minimum.

Many countries have far to go. For example, England sometimes incarcerates its young offenders for indeterminate periods. The Russian Federation has no juvenile courts, judges, prosecutors or lawyers. In Yemen, the law allows

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In a German detention facility, a young man marks off the time remaining in his sentence.

for the arbitrary detention of children.

Societies may differ as to how they interpret fundamental human values, but in all societies the expectation of responsible behaviour increases as a child grows. We cannot legitimately expect a seasoned, mature understanding of the subtleties of right and wrong from adolescents, especially those who have suffered from abuse or neglect. Article 39 of the Convention specifically calls for countries to take measures to promote the recovery and social reintegration of such child victims. We are dealing with human beings who are still developing. Our goal must be to help mend what has gone wrong and prepare them for later success—not simply to punish them.

Real justice for juveniles

Fortunately, we have a useful tool for developing our juvenile justice systems: the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It establishes broad rights for children, and ratifying countries pledge to reform their laws to fulfil those rights. Among its many benefits, the Convention has served as a wake-up call to countries that have not

adequately addressed the issue of juvenile justice.

The Convention, which defines children as people below the age of 18, lays out specific guidelines for the treatment of any child who runs afoul of the law. Among its provisions, children are presumed innocent until proved guilty and are entitled to appropriate legal counsel and fair resolution without delay. It stipulates that children accused of infringing the penal code must be treated in a way that promotes their sense of dignity and takes into account the desirability of assuming a constructive role in society. It prohibits cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment, including capital punishment or life imprisonment without possibility of release. It stresses that detention should only be a measure of last resort and only for the shortest period of time.

The underlying message is clear: The best interests of the child must be at the heart of any juvenile justice process. For those young people found guilty of criminal behaviour, the emphasis should be on reintegration, not retribution.

Along with the Convention and the Riyadh Guidelines (adopted in 1990), we have guidance from the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (1990) and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (1985), also known as the 'Beijing Rules'. The Beijing Rules provide guidance to member States in developing measures to protect the human rights of children in conflict with the law. Underscoring once again the importance of placing the child's best interests at centre stage, the first of the Fundamental Perspectives of these rules is: "Member States shall seek, in conformity with their respective general interests, to further the well-being of the juvenile and her or his family."

Reasoned responses

Prodded by the Convention, many countries are beginning the process of making their laws responsive to the needs of juvenile offenders. In Latin America, a remarkable reform of juvenile justice has been under way since 1990, paralleling the region's dramatic democratization process. Brazil led the way with its Statute for Children and Adolescents, adopted following a fervent outcry provoked by widely publicized violence against children who were living on the streets.

The Statute sets out strict guidelines to ensure the rights and freedoms of juveniles in conflict with the law, including a specification that detention be used as a last resort and only for the shortest appropriate period of time. Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru have also enacted such measures, and reform is under consideration in Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua and Paraguay.

Young people must be held accountable for their offences in a manner appropriate to their level of maturity.

In a first step towards more progressive laws, Chile passed a measure in 1994 that prohibits incarceration of juveniles in adult prisons. By 1996, the number of juveniles held in adult institutions had fallen by more than half, to less than 2,000. In Costa Rica, about 140 juveniles were deprived of their liberty before passage of reform legislation in 1996. After its passage, the number dropped to 40. This is the result of rationalizing the sys-

tem so that those accused of minor offences receive the help they need for successful reintegration into society, leaving only serious offenders in detention.

One example of a reasoned approach to juvenile justice is New Zealand's The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act of 1989. The legislation aims to separate welfare issues from justice issues and to mete out justice through consensus, rather than heavy-handed government intervention. The measure recognizes the special needs of young people by involving family members in the justice process and bringing in outside agencies that can offer real rehabilitation alternatives. The majority of youth are diverted from criminal courts and confinement institutions.

In addition, New Zealand's process underscores the value of partnerships. By involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), outside legal counsel and young people and their families, the juvenile justice system remains open. This openness reinforces something that young people need to know: The door into that system swings both ways—it does not lock forever behind them.

A unique opportunity for reform arose in South Africa with the swift ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995 and President Nelson Mandela's enthusiastic endorsement of the Convention. The process combined the framework of international instruments with traditional African methods of conflict resolution. Based on the spirit of *ubuntu*, or community approach, these strategies encourage the participation of the child, family and community.

Likewise in Namibia, independence and the ratification of the Convention provided an opportunity to further juvenile justice reform. Efforts began after a 1993 study found that 90 per cent of children had been sentenced

without legal representation, and those sentenced to serve time were being sent to adult prisons. Now, a screening process has been established to divert juveniles in the capital, Windhoek, away from the justice system where possible. The condition is that they complete a life-skills course, which teaches responsible decision-making. Young people are increasingly being held separately from adults in Namibia, and a police training manual has been prepared to assist in developing the skills of law enforcement officials in dealing with juveniles.

With the adoption of a Child Protection Code in 1996, Tunisia embarked on an effort to create a culture of child rights throughout the country. The Code requires that children in conflict with the law be consulted and that their cases be heard in juvenile courts presided over by specially trained judges.

In Scotland, offenders under age 16 appear before a 'children's hearing', which is not considered a court of law and has no punitive options. In the West Bank, lawyers from Defense for Children International (DCI-Israel and DCI-Palestine) have worked together to represent minors in Israeli and Palestinian courts. Although there is not yet a juvenile justice system in Gaza, a cooperative training project of DCI-Israel and Palestinian Lawyers for Human Rights has provided training to build such a system.

For the most part, I am proud of the attention my country, Sweden, has given to juvenile justice. The system emphasizes care by social service agencies for anyone under 21. Children under 15 may not be sentenced under the penal code, and only in rare cases is imprisonment allowed for a child under 18. A prison sentence is allowed for young people between

18 and 21 only if the crime is especially serious, and life imprisonment is not permitted for a crime committed by anyone younger than 21. However, in recent years we have seen a number of heinous crimes committed by young people in Sweden. In these cases the courts have seen no alternative to a prison sentence. A recent government report has proposed new alternatives for these offenders, such as special youth homes.

Some countries have so far faltered in their attempts to reform their juvenile justice systems. India's Juvenile Justice Act of 1986, designed to promote uniform treatment on the basis of minimum UN standards, has faced spotty implementation. The Act supports separate systems for handling destitute children and delinquent children, promotes humane and non-institutional services and emphasizes NGO par-

ticipation. But in action it has not proved to be very child-friendly. Officials who deal with children have not been adequately trained, and while the State is empowered to take charge, it is not obligated to care and protect.

In at least 15 countries, 7-year-old children can be held responsible for criminal actions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has not developed a system of juvenile justice. Eritrea incarcerates children from age 12 together with adults. Fiji's Juvenile Act of 1974 establishes separate courts and detention centres for children. But the reform undermined some of the compassionate aspects of the traditional courts, and efforts are under way to re-establish them.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, to which countries report on their efforts to implement the Convention, has expressed concern about juvenile justice procedures in a number of countries. Based on a review of reports from 51 countries, the Committee explicitly suggested legal reform in 37 countries. Obviously there is much to be done, but I am encouraged by the fact that juvenile justice is finally on the world's agenda.

The path to adulthood is uncharted. As young people travel it, they must negotiate around more obstacles than ever before. Sometimes they stumble. When they come into conflict with the law, they have the right to fair treatment by a justice system designed for rehabilitation, not retribution. The creation of that system is a responsibility that we all must carry on our shoulders. If we do not, who will? ■



When young people come into conflict with the law, they need to know that the door into the justice system swings both ways—it does not lock forever behind them. In Cleveland (US), a teenager is held in a juvenile detention centre.

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Old enough to be a criminal?

Children below a certain age are too young to be held responsible for breaking the law. That concept is spelled out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which calls for nations to establish a minimum age "below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law." But the Convention does not set a specific age, and it varies greatly.

International standards, such as the Beijing Rules for juvenile justice, recommend that the age of criminal responsibility be based on emotional, mental and intellectual maturity and that it not be fixed too low.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors countries' implementation of the Convention, has recommended that the age be guided by the best interests of the child.

In the US, the age of criminal responsibility is established by state law. Only 13 states have set minimum ages, which range from 6 to 12 years old. Most states rely on common law, which holds that from age 7 to age 14, children cannot be presumed to bear responsibility but can be held responsible.

In Japan, offenders below age 20 are tried in a family court, rather than in the criminal court system. In all Scandinavian countries, the age of criminal responsibility is 15, and adolescents under 18 are subject to a system of justice that is geared mostly towards social services, with incarceration as the last resort. As of April 1997, only 15 juveniles were serving a prison sentence in Sweden.

In China, children from age 14 to 18 are dealt with by the juvenile justice system and may be sentenced to life imprisonment for particularly serious crimes.

In most countries of Latin America, the reform of juvenile justice legislation is under way. As a result, the age of adult criminal responsibility has been raised to 18 in Brazil, Colombia and Peru. Children from age 12 to 18 are held responsible under a system of juvenile justice.

The wide variation in age of criminal responsibility reflects a lack of international consensus, and the number of countries with low ages indicates that many juvenile justice systems do not adequately consider the child's best interests.

Age of criminal responsibility is just one variable influencing how juveniles are treated by justice systems. Other variables include whether there is a separate juvenile law based on child rights; whether a young person is subject to punitive sanctions or only to socio-educational measures; and whether the country has separate court systems and jails for young people. A juvenile justice system provides legal protections and an objective standard for treatment. In its absence, young people may be handled by the adult criminal justice system or be held in 'protective' custody, where they have no legal protections and may face arbitrary or harsh treatment.

Age of criminal responsibility

Minimum age at which children are subject to penal law in countries with 10 million or more children under 18 years old

Mexico	*6-12	Indonesia	8	Korea, Rep.	12	Russian Fed.	14
Bangladesh	7	Kenya	8	Morocco	12	Viet Nam	14
India	7	UK (Scotland)	8	Uganda	12	Egypt	15
Myanmar	7	Ethiopia	9	Algeria	13	Argentina	16
Nigeria	7	Iran	***9	France	13	Brazil	****18
Pakistan	7	Philippines	9	Poland	13	Colombia	****18
South Africa	7	Nepal	10	Uzbekistan	13	Peru	****18
Sudan	7	UK (England)	10	China	14	Congo, D. Rep.	-
Tanzania	7	UK (Wales)	10	Germany	14		
Thailand	7	Ukraine	10	Italy	14		
United States	**7	Turkey	11	Japan	14		

* Most states 11 or 12 years; age 11 for federal crimes.

** Age determined by state; minimum age is 7 in most states under common law.

*** Age 9 for girls, 15 for boys.

**** Official age of criminal responsibility; from age 12 children's actions are subject to juvenile legal proceedings.
Sources: CRC Country Reports (1992-1996); *Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Delinquency in Central and Eastern Europe*, 1995; United Nations, *Implementation of UN Mandates on Juvenile Justice in ESCAP*, 1994; Geert Cappelaere, Children's Rights Centre, University of Gent, Belgium.

Over 7 million children are refugees

More than half the world's refugees are children under 18 years of age, according to estimates based on a survey by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Although the number of child refugees worldwide has declined from a record 10.2 million in 1993, at 7.4 million it is still greater than the entire population of Switzerland.

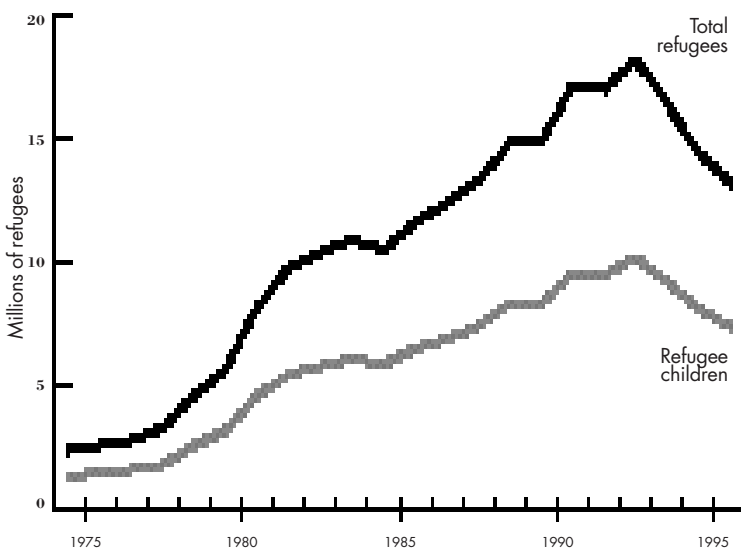
Of a total 13.2 million refugees, the greatest number, 2.7 million, have fled Afghanistan. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the home country of the second highest number, 1 million.

Iran is sheltering the largest number of refugees, with 2 million people from Afghanistan and Iraq. Pakistan, the second-ranking country of asylum,

currently has 1.2 million refugees from Afghanistan.

Refugees—those crossing national borders to seek safety—represent about one third of the total number of people uprooted by conflicts or persecution. UNHCR estimates that the remaining two thirds, more than 30 million people, are displaced within their own countries. If the proportion of children among the internally displaced is similar to that among refugees, then the combined total of uprooted children worldwide is over 20 million. The internally displaced face many of the same hardships as refugees but are often cut off from assistance from relief organizations.

Global refugee population, 1975-1996



Note: Children (aged 0-17 years) comprise 56% of total refugee population, extrapolated from demographic data on sample of 4 million refugees.

Source: UNHCR, *UNHCR at a Glance*, February 1997; and UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: 1995*.

Hidden killers

In more than 60 countries around the world, over 115 million anti-personnel landmines threaten lives and limbs. Approximately 2.5 million new mines are laid each year.

Egypt has the largest number of mines, an estimated 23 million—a legacy of World War II and subsequent Arab-Israeli wars. Iran has 16 million mines, the second highest number, followed by Angola with 15 million. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most heavily mined country, with 152 mines per square mile. Together, Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia have suffered

85% of the world's landmine casualties.

Mine clearance is dangerous and costly: An anti-personnel landmine costs as little as \$3 to manufacture, but as much as \$300 to \$1,000 to remove. The pace of de-mining lags far behind that of new mines still being placed. Only about 15.6 million mines have been cleared (most of these in Egypt), just 13% of the number in place. The cost of removing all the active mines worldwide is estimated at \$33 billion.

A landmine kills or maims a person every 20 minutes—more than 25,000 people a year. Of these victims, 5,000

to 6,000 are children. Angola has about 70,000 amputees, including 8,000 children—one amputee for every 154 persons. Most casualties are civilians killed or injured after hostilities have ended.

Hope for curbing this deadly plague centres around 'the Ottawa process'. This initiative was launched with a global NGO coalition calling for action at a conference last October, when Canada invited every country to return to Ottawa in December 1997 to sign a treaty forbidding the production, use, stockpiling or export of anti-personnel landmines. About 60 countries support this total ban, while others have indicated partial support.

Existing and cleared landmines (estimated)

	Mines remaining	Mines cleared
Egypt	23,000,000	11,000,000
Iran	16,000,000	200,000
Angola	15,000,000	80,000
Afghanistan	10,000,000	363,000
Cambodia	10,000,000	62,000
China	10,000,000	280,000
Iraq	10,000,000	21,000
Bosnia/Herz.	6,000,000	—
Viet Nam	3,500,000	59,000
Croatia	3,000,000	250,000
Mozambique	3,000,000	17,000
Other countries	6,214,000	3,228,000
Total	115,714,000	15,560,000

Source: UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, January 1997.

The cost of war: Billions for development diverted to emergencies

Wars are doubly destructive, shattering lives and societies and also forcing reallocation of resources that could be used for longer-term development. Sorely needed development aid has been increasingly shifted to emergency assistance during the past decade—and even resources for emergency aid have fallen short of people's needs.

Government allocations for peace-keeping and contributions for emergency humanitarian assistance (most

of it due to war rather than natural disasters) increased fivefold, from less than \$2 billion in 1985 to nearly \$10 billion in 1994, reflecting an upsurge in conflicts that have had a devastating impact on civilians, especially children.

Despite this dramatic increase, contributions to UN agencies for emergency aid have consistently fallen short of the amounts requested. During 1992–1996, donors' response to UN emergency appeals fell short by an

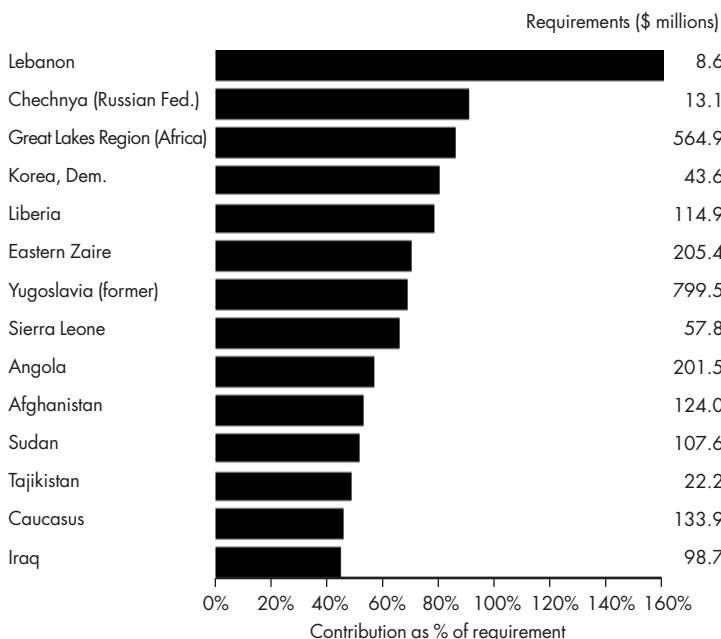
average of 28%. Of the appeals for 14 countries in 1996 and early 1997, contributions for 13 countries fell short of the amounts required. The request for aid to Iraq had the greatest shortfall, almost 60%.

UNICEF and other agencies strive to integrate emergency programmes into longer-term development efforts, providing immunizations, for example, and 'school-in-a-box' kits so that children can continue learning. Despite

these efforts, however, conflicts undermine development.

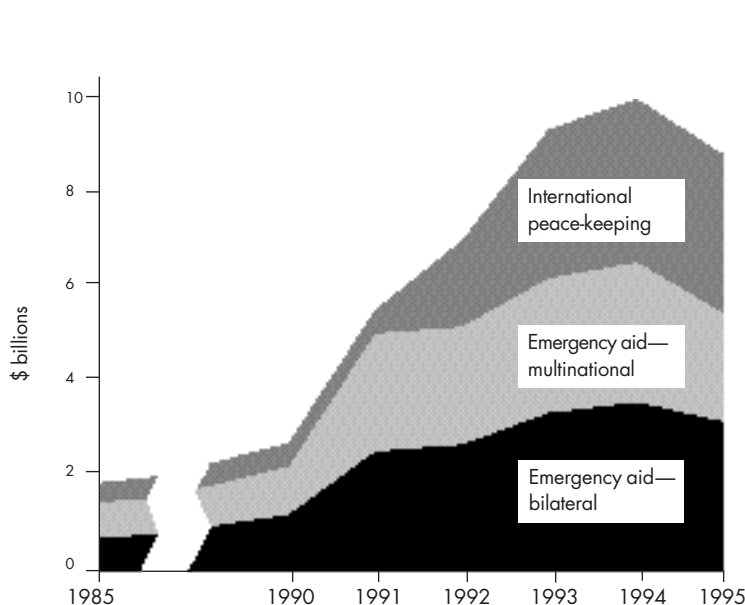
In 1985, allocations for emergency aid and peace-keeping were equivalent to 5% of total development aid from industrialized countries. By 1994, these allocations had reached over 16% of their total aid. This means that tens of billions of dollars that could have been available for long-term development have been shifted to help alleviate the human costs of war.

UN humanitarian assistance appeals



Note: Refers to appeals with end dates in 1996 or early 1997. Source: UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs Web site at <http://www.reliefweb.int>, April 1997.

Emergency aid and peace-keeping expenditures



Source: OECD, *Development Cooperation* (1994 and 1996 reports).