

LECTURE ON WAR-AFFECTED CHILDREN IN WEST AFRICA
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IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

Among the various activities which it conducts internationally, the International Organization for Migration has always paid special attention to society's most vulnerable groups—those victimized by the activities of organized networks and those suffering the consequences of armed conflicts. Children are a part of the fringe group that benefits from IOM assistance.

While there is a growing concern over children who suffer the consequences of trafficking for purposes of forced labour or sexual exploitation, others are undergoing the effects of war without any protection whatsoever. Millions of children have either been killed or injured and have remained handicapped for life, or have been forced to witness or participate in acts of unspeakable violence.

Africa has been and continues to be a place of suffering for the children caught in these situations. Wherever possible, the IOM has not only provided emergency assistance for these children, but has also done what it could to generate a greater awareness of the seriousness of the problem.

The effects of war and its impact on child development have received special attention from all the institutions and organizations involved in the rehabilitation of those who have incurred physical or mental injuries as a result of fighting. These children are the primary victims of the family disintegration arising from the loss or displacement of those closest to them and from the disruption of health care services and food supplies, not to mention the psychological problems and traumas that require extensive follow-up before they can regain their place in society.