

11. Building Local Capacities for Protection and Advocacy

It is critical to build and strengthen local capacities for protection and advocacy for war-affected children, both in the midst of ongoing violence and in its aftermath. Examples of such initiatives in West Africa include: establishment of a National Commission for Children (as proposed in Sierra Leone) to ensure that the protection and well-being of children is a major priority in the aftermath of conflict and that it will be reflected in national priority setting, policy making and resource allocation; formation of an informal group of elders and statesmen to serve as local advocates within a country (as in Liberia), and the formation of a parliamentary caucus for the protection of children (as in Sierra Leone).

I urge the donor community, UN agencies and international NGOs to do more to support and strengthen national institutions, local NGOs and civil society organizations within West Africa.

12. Involving Young People in the Movement for the Protection of War-Affected Children - Children-to-Children Network

I believe that we must involve young people as an active part of a worldwide social and political movement for the protection of war-affected children—as participants, advocates, and provide them with opportunities for self-expression. In this connection I have proposed the development of several initiatives. One such initiative is the Children-to-Children Network.

This involves building links between children in war-affected countries and their counterparts from countries at peace, so that they can learn about each other's vastly different experiences, build solidarity among themselves, and enable children to act as advocates on behalf of other children. Such links could be developed on direct and community-based levels, school-to-school, university-to-university, neighborhood-to-neighborhood, association-to-association. Modern information technology, including the internet, should be employed to facilitate such communication and exchange among young people.

I very much hope that, from Accra, will begin a process of developing Children-to-Children Networks within West Africa.

13. Developing Media Information for the Benefit of War-Affected Children - Voice of Children Initiative

I have often been struck by the absence of and hunger for information, recreation and entertainment among children in situations of conflict and in its aftermath. To fill this gap I have proposed the systematic development of radio programmes—Voice-of-Children—devoted mainly to the needs and interests of children and young people in those situations. This would serve to