

Promoting a Culture of Peace

Although the modern rules of war seek to protect non-combatants, especially children, from harm, this has become impossible to do in practice. While serving the needs of the most vulnerable populations, humanitarian actors must bear witness to this dark truth and seek to promote an anti-war agenda, also called a culture of peace.

Christopher Lowry: Testimony to the Tribunal

importance of finding ways to involve children and youth in all these areas.

Please pull the baby out of the fire – The endgame of protecting children in armed conflict: Testimony of

Christopher Lowry, Programme Director, More Than Bandages Program, Médecins sans Frontières, Canada

Mr. Lowry began his evidence by making a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' soldiering. The latter in his view is characterised by practical inability to protect children from the effects of war, based in collective political attitudes. Illustrating his point by reference to the seventeenth-century English satirist, Mandeville, he suggested that:

In our efforts to protect children from war we may be working in this grey moral territory where, although we are all naturally concerned to be perceived as kind to children, our ruling elites and governments consider war to be a legitimate, useful and often profitable option.

The conclusion reached in his evidence is that war cannot be waged in such a way that it harms adults rather than children,

particularly given that children are traumatised by harm to their adult caregivers and it would be impossible to target only 'those adults who have no deep caring relationships with any children. If children cannot be protected from war, the only realistic response is to seek means of promoting an anti-war agenda that will renounce the idea that war is a legitimate political tool. Thus, he claimed, international humanitarian law should not seek to regulate war but to establish that it is 'an illegitimate, criminal option'.

? Questions to Christopher Lowry

Mr. Lowry responded to queries and interventions from the Tribunal and other witnesses about possible ways of bringing about a culture of peace, with suggestions for innovative research topics to shed light on the question, including:

- The political economy of war;
- The structural underpinnings of conflict and violence;
- The potential of institutional reform for bringing about peace;
- Community processes that generate healing after conflict.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS, PLANNING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are four main challenges in conflict analysis. Policy is rarely based on hard evidence, response tends to be poorly co-ordinated with limited sustainability and it is difficult to assess the impact of interventions. The solution to these problems lies in finding better analytical tools, methods of developing integrated responses and improving research methods.

One aim of analysis is to identify the factors that generate both conflict and peace. It is now recognised that facts need to be separated from perceptions of different stakeholders, who often have competing agendas, and that methodological considerations require further attention.

Integrated responses are difficult to developing in the context of sectorial planning, especially given

SUMMARY LUNCHTIME PRESENTATION

the diverse objectives of various stakeholders. It is important to recognise the potential of establishing a division of labour between sectors and actors as well as adopting a common framework of analysis and objectives.

On the positive side, there is a noticeable trend towards evidence-based policy with a greater, more realistic emphasis on ownership and sustainability. Nevertheless, significant co-ordination problems exist. At worst, planning that has no factual basis and failure of agencies to cooperate not only wastes resources, but may actually do more harm than good.

Summary of the lunchtime address by David Nyheim, Director, Forum for Early Warning and Early Response, 6 April 2000