

How War Hurts Women and Children

Rape and sexual slavery

From Bangladesh to Bosnia, Angola to Vietnam, women and girls have been the victims of systematic gang-rape led by soldiers. In Sierra Leone, health workers estimate that as many as 90 per cent of rape survivors test positive for STDs; HIV/AIDS infections are probably raging as well, but a lack of funds prohibits testing.

In the Sudan, women who are considered 'good breeders' have been locked up in camps to produce future fighters. Many don't survive. Childbirth complications, more likely in the stressful conditions of war, lead to increased child and maternal mortality. In Sierra Leone, when rebels needed to be on the move, they jumped on the abdomens of women in labour to speed delivery.

Charlotte Lindsey (above, right), the 34-year-old head of the Women and War Project of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), believes that the way forward is to teach the soldiers. Eight years ago, she was in a house in Bosnia when a group of fighters burst in, guns blazing. 'There were ten of us, and they had us up against the wall,' she recalls. 'I was terrified, but knew we needed to make a connection with these men. I started talking, hoping my voice wouldn't quaver.'

By the time she'd finished, she'd persuaded the intruders to apologise. Lindsey's project now attempts to teach armies and rebels not to rape or torture, through lectures and workshops. 'During conflict,

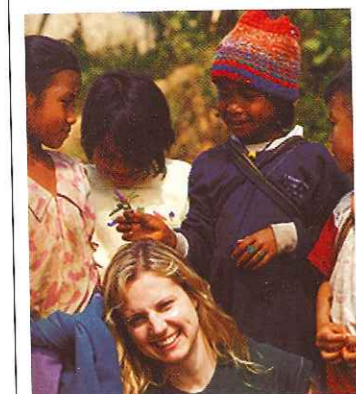


Charlotte Lindsey's (left) project teaches armies and rebels not to rape or torture their enemies

people need protection,' she says. 'That's what we try to provide.'

Refugee camps

Unfortunately, those meant to protect are, in some cases, the ones who abuse. A shocking recent study alleges that a small minority of UN peacekeepers, UN aid agencies and humanitarian workers – those meant to help refugees – are forcing girls and women to have sex in 'payment' for aid. The joint assessment, issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees >



Dr Samantha Nutt, co-founder of War Child Canada, which assists war-affected children

The world's worst conflicts #1

Sudan

What you may know

The horrendous nineteen-year civil war in Sudan has been little covered in the West, yet it has cost the lives of 2 million people so far. The latest round of hostilities began in 1983, when the fundamentalist Muslim government declared Sharia law for the entire country, and began dishing out Islamic punishments that include amputations and death by stoning, despite the fact that a major part of the population isn't Muslim. Since then, the Muslim north has been pitted against rebels from the non-Muslim south.

What you don't know

Millions of Sudanese have died from famine and disease triggered by the fighting. Thousands are captured and forced into slavery every year, including the sexual slavery of more than 10,000 children.



Maria Bello

Actress, *Coyote Ugly*

'In my work for Save the Children, I've seen children who are displaced by war, but still in touch with joy. We can learn from them.'

Bradley Whitford

Actor, *The West Wing*

'I want the legacy of my country not to be how we waged war, but the compassion with which we waged peace.'

Janel Moloney

Actress, *The West Wing*

'You just have to have enough faith that your individual spirit and mind and heart will make a difference.'



Kyra Sedgwick

Actress

'Everyone makes a difference. You don't deserve a place on this earth unless you take responsibility for it and its future.'

Estella Warren

Actress, *Planet Of The Apes*

'Good will prevail. We just need to want it enough.'