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**Course: Diploma in Child Protection in Humanitarian Crises**

**Date of Submission: 30/11/2019**

**Module two assignments**

**Questions**

1. Putting in perspective the 1989 UN convention on the rights of a child, in about two pages discuss the issues around which rights of children have been enshrined?
2. Children have a right for their views to be heard, and respected more especially when making decisions that are likely to affect their wellbeing. In your opinion, does the same apply when making decisions in emergency situations, and if you are in charge of some humanitarian situation explain what you would do to ensure that the rights of children are respected
3. The UN convention on the rights of children recognizes that children around the world face challenges and there are threats in terms of their safety in times of crises. To take care of the same governments of various countries have set out rights in six areas of concern. Putting your government in perspective or where you work, discuss four of this giving a personal input if the government has been to task in exercising the same when it comes to humanitarian crises
4. Africa has a high prevalence of child protection issues due to issues of population as well as the state of the economy. Its leaders came together and adopted a carter in 1990 to protect their children in cases of emergencies. Discuss the issues around which protection for children is anchored in the charter.
5. Cases of sexual violence have been on the rise either from relatives, caregivers, host community and even from the security forces in times of crises. Presented with a case of sexual molestation for a minor, discuss how you will handle it citing relevant acts that will guide you in coming up with a decision

1. **Putting in perspective the 1989 UN convention on the rights of a child, in about two pages discuss the issues around which rights of children have been enshrined?**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations by its resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. This was the end of a process which had begun with the preparations for the 1979 International Year of the Child. That year, discussions started on a draft convention submitted by the Government of Poland. Also, specific provisions concerning children had been incorporated in a number of human rights and humanitarian law treaties. Nevertheless, some states argued that there was a need for a comprehensive statement on children's rights which would be binding under international law.[[1]](#footnote-1) The UNCRC ( United Nation Convention on the Rights of Children) is a valuable and detailed utopian map that predicts everyone being adequately cared for, protected from serious harms, and flourishing together in equality, justice and freedom.

There are a lot of issues and controversies about the 1989 Convention on Rights of Child as far as African is concerned. During the convention in 1989 Charter Africa had been underrepresented during the drafting process with only Algeria, Morocco, Senegal and Egypt participated meaningfully in the drafting process. The perception is that CRC (Convention on the Right of Children) norms with respect to the promotion and protection of children’s rights are heavily tilted to a ‘Western’ rights ideology therefore lacking a meaningful African influence.[[2]](#footnote-2) UNCRC is criticised, for example, as “indebted to specific Euro-American adult understandings which picture the child as ignorant, innocent and needy” (Arce, 2012); Arce’s emphasis on “the child” challenges Western over-individualism.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The CRC Article 32 state right of the Child to be protected from Economic Exploitation: Children in Africa are engaged in the worst forms of child labour, particularly in agriculture and domestic service. In most African setting, its normal to engage children in farming and most livelihood activities done by their parents as way of learning and fitting in the society. Children under 18 most help in domestic work such as fetching water from streams, collecting fire wood and cultivating alongside their parents in the farm. In African culture and setting children participate in certain works in accordance with their ages. For example, a child between the ages of five to seven can be sent on errands to deliver messages within the community. A nine-year-old girl might be required to assist in looking after the younger siblings and cleaning the house. A boy of age ten may oversee small livestock and assists in nurturing agricultural farms in the compound.

The CRC of 1989 rights are more than wish-lists. They are extremely carefully crafted philosophical, political and legal statements and tested over many decades, as well as ratified and enacted through many levels of law and many states governments.

The UNCRC sets age of recruitment into their respective domestic armed forces fifteen years[[4]](#footnote-4), yet the same convention defines a child as human under age of 18 years.

The UNCRC does not have a provision on the duties and responsibilities of the child. The fact to the idea that children too have responsibilities depending on their evolving capacities and these are responsibilities towards family and society to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect parents, superiors and elders and to preserve African cultural values. The duties of the child are subject to his or her age or ability.

The issues of UNCRC led to development of ACRWC (African Charter on Rights and Welfare of Child). The ACRWC emerged out of the social and cultural values of Africa, including those relating to family, community and society and takes into consideration the virtues of cultural heritage, historical background and values of the African civilization. The UNCRC and ACRWC both share the key principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, children’s participation and the survival and development of the child. However, the ACRWC is more explicit about certain issues relevant in Africa which are not in the CRC. For instance, factors disadvantaging the girl- child are considered. As children are used as child-soldiers, it went beyond the 15 year age limit for military recruitment stipulated in the CRC.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Therefore, the 1989 Convention has led to the right and Protection of children to be practiced in all communities both developed and developing Countries. Though in some Countries, crisis still affect the rights of children hence making them to be neglected of their rights and end up as labourers, victims of sexual abuse and exploitation and many more forms of exploitation hence denied of their rights.

**2. Children have a right for their views to be heard, and respected more especially when making decisions that are likely to affect their wellbeing. In your opinion, does the same apply when making decisions in emergency situations, and if you are in charge of some humanitarian situation explain what you would do to ensure that the rights of children are respected**

Since the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 by most member states Article 12, the provision that children have a right to express their views and have them taken seriously in accordance with their age and maturity has proven to more challenging due to different understanding of childhood according to different cultures and traditions. However, there have much progress been made in many countries, with countless positive examples of legislation, policy and practice.[[6]](#footnote-6)

An estimated 535 million children nearly one in four children in the world live in countries affected by humanitarian crises, often without access to medical care, clean water and sanitation facilities, proper nutrition, quality education or protection. Supporting the provision of these services is central to UNICEF’s policy of protecting children in humanitarian situations, as mandated by its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action1 unrealised.[[7]](#footnote-7) And in South Sudan there are thousands of children living in IDPs camp, UNMISS protection of civilians’ camps and refugees camp and their right to be heard are violated.

Therefore, the following are some of the ways I will ensure the rights of children are protected and respected in humanitarian situation.

* Participation and consultation of children during baseline survey for development projects that are target youth through focus group discussion with the boys and girls in groups. Listen to their views and challenges and ideas. This will ensure development of project interventions that can address the needs of the children with humanitarian situation. Participation of children’s in program gives opportunity for expression and active involvement in decision-making at different levels in matters that concern them. It requires information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect and taking into account the child’s age and maturity. Participation strengthens accountability and building opportunities for children to engagein issues of concern to them in their localcommunity not only contributes to civicengagement, but also strengthens capacityfor holding governments and other duty bearers to account.
* Set up mediums where children views and opinions involving their interest and concerns can be assessed by the larger community. This will give opportunities to children’s voice to be heard.
* The child victim and child witness of a crime must be given an opportunity to fully exercise her or his right to freely express her or his view in accordance with United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/20, “Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime”.[[8]](#footnote-8)
* Provide psychosocial support to children caught up in a conflict and protracted crises, mothers can be offered counselling services alongside their children.
* Support and encourage children’s organizations and child-led initiatives to address violence and to include these organizations in the establishment and evaluation of anti-violence programmes and measures, so that children can play a key role in their own protection
* The ’Do No Harm ‘principle. This implies that humanitarian action must: avoid discrimination between affected populations on the basis of the causes of crisis. Avoid creating or exacerbating conflict and insecurity for affected populations. Take into account the special needs of the most vulnerable groups of children and women including internally displaced persons, unaccompanied minors and the disabled and develop relevant, targeted programme interventions.[[9]](#footnote-9)

3. **The UN convention on the rights of children recognizes that children around the world face challenges and there are threats in terms of their safety in times of crises. To take care of the same governments of various countries have set out rights in six areas of concern. Putting your government in perspective or where you work, discuss four of this giving a personal input if the government has been to task in exercising the same when it comes to humanitarian crises**

The UN CRC of 1989 defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” It states that the best interest of the child should be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children. Countries that are party to CRC agree to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures to ensure that all children in their jurisdiction have the rights set forth in the Convention. Such rights include life and development; name, nationality, and parental care; health and access to healthcare services; and education. They also include protection from abuse and neglect, and freedom of expression, religion, association, and peaceful assembly. CRC also calls for the protection of children from economic, sexual, and other forms of exploitation, torture, and capital punishment for offenses committed before the age of 18. It also provides special protections for orphans, refugees, and the disabled.[[10]](#footnote-10)

South Sudan ratified the charter on 23 January, 2015 and became the 195th State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, like most African countries who had ratified the document, there are continuous and numerous violence of children rights in South Sudan.

After a peaceful independence referendum in 2011, the people of South Sudan were filled with hope that, they could finally leave behind decades of war and forge a brighter future. But the promise of a better life for most South Sudanese was shattered in December 2013, when the country descended into conflict. This conflict has resulted to massive internal displacement of people including children, death, refugee crisis and tribal conflicts.

According to UNICEF, out of an estimated 748,000 internally displaced children, 400,000 children are out of school; more than 11,000 children have been recruited into armed groups and forces; and over 6,600 children have been separated from their families.[[11]](#footnote-11) The humanitarian crisis in the country has resulted in massive internal and external displacement, disproportionately affecting women and girls who account for at least 85% of the displaced population. The United Nations’ Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2017) estimates that at least 16,715 children are missing, separated, and unaccompanied since December 2013.

The continuous conflict since 2013 has led to problem of out of school among thousands of children in South Sudan to due to massive displacement by the war. The government policy does not support education when it comes to budget, most of the resources are allocated to defence which keep escalating the conflict and displacement of citizens. Around South Sudan the learning environment and infrastructures are poor with most children study under trees as class room. Hence Article 28 (right to education) is seriously affected education system. Education can further children’s resilience by providing them with psychosocial support to overcome traumatic events and the practical skills to respond to future challenges more effectively. The children who don’t go to school live dangerous lives, these force children to drink alcohol, crime and stealing. Therefore the government of South Sudan is not doing enough to provide conducive environment for children to go school.[[12]](#footnote-12) Provision of meals of at least one meal per day helps children a lot in their education but the continues war in South Sudan puts approximately 3.5 million people in South Sudan to face emergency levels of food insecurity.

The health care services and facilities are very poor in South Sudan. The government does not have capacity in terms of health personnel and facility to provide proper health services to its population. South Sudan has high mortality rate of under-five due to protracted war which started in 2013. Even before the onset of the crisis, 80% of healthcare services in South Sudan were provided by and or sup­ported by humanitarian agencies. The breakdown of healthcare services, mass displacement of civilians and conditions inside densely populated IDP settlements, as well camps, have made communities more vulnerable to outbreaks of disease, particularly measles, malaria and cholera[[13]](#footnote-13). South Sudan’s poor infrastructure means that a health response often takes time to operationalize, and logistical movement of supplies can be time consuming. Therefore, the Article 24 (health and health services) Every child has the right to the best possible health is not well taken care of in South Sudan and the government has to find solution and peace to the protracted conflicts in South Sudan.

In South Sudan, there is high level of violation of article 19 of CRC (protection from violence, abuse and neglect). Due to the continuous conflicts in South Sudan, sexual violence against children and women are rampant which are committed by soldiers and community members who take advantage of loopholes in law enforcement mechanisms and Community ties. Thousands of people who sought refugees at UN protection of civilians’ camp and at refugees centres and therefore due to high population density at such camps has contributed to increased rape and sexual violence against children.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Since the start of the 2013 conflict, over 19,000 children have been reported to be associated with armed forces and groups. In 2017, the conflict expanded to new areas and reports of killing, recruitment and use of children and denial of humanitarian access increased in the Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Equatoria regions. In May 2018, UNICEF South Sudan and UNMISS (United Nation Mission in South Sudan) supported the National DDR Commission in facilitating the release of 210 children (207 boys; 3 girls) from the SPLA-IO (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement) and the National Salvation Front (NAS) in Pibor, Boma State. This was the third release of children supported by UNICEF since 2015, bringing the total number of released children across Boma State to 2,110. In alignment with the 2016 peace agreement that was signed by the government of South Sudan and the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM), as well as additional agreements made by the government and the SPLA-IO ( Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-In Opposition) in an effort to attain peace, in February 2018, UNICEF supported the release and reintegration of 348 children (248 boys; 100 girls) associated with the SSNLM (South Sudan National Liberation Movement) and SPLA-IO in Yambio, Western Equatoria State.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Recommendation

* Uphold the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, ensuring that schools, teachers and children are protected from armed occupation and/or attack
* Maintain the national education budget alloca­tion, prioritising timely payment of teachers in govern­ment areas
* Non state armed groups must commit to the protection of children’s education in their territories, and sign-up to the 2010 Deed of Commitment for the Pro­tection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict
* Support in rebuilding or rehabilitating schools that have been either fully or partially destroyed by the conflict

In a nut shell, the CRC has been a great way to fight the challenges children are facing in the World, though South Sudan has adopted the rules set by the CRC, the continues crisis in the Country will never allow children to exercise their rights but rather face challenges of child abuses through sexual exploitation, child labour, forced into the Army, violation of their rights and among others that even the Government has failed to attend to because they claim not to have time for these but rather fight to bring peace in order to solve all these challenges.

4**. Africa has a high prevalence of child protection issues due to issues of population as well as the state of the economy. Its leaders came together and adopted a carter in 1990 to protect their children in cases of emergencies. Discuss the issues around which protection for children is anchored in the charter.**

The UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the CRC on November 20 1989.[[16]](#footnote-16) The CRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. And on 23 January, 2015, South Sudan became the 195th State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).[[17]](#footnote-17) The CRC protects the broadest scope of fundamental human rights ever brought together within one treaty - economic, social, cultural, civil and political. The Convention has 45 articles and the following are a few among others.[[18]](#footnote-18)

* Article 1(definition of the child) everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.
* Article 28 (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child.
* Article 2(non-discrimination) The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.
* Article 3 (best interests of the child) the best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.
* Article 24 (health and health services) Every child has the right to the best possible health
* Article 32 (child labour) Governments must protect children from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development or education.
* Article 4 (implementation of the Convention) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children’s rights.
* Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect)
* Article 6(life, survival and development) every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.
* Article 19(protection from violence, abuse and neglect) Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Although most African states have ratified the Convention on the Rights of a Child, there are a lot issues and controversies as far as child protection is concern in Africa. The following are some of the issues on some articles;

Article one of the CRC defines a child as a person below the age of eighteen years, this is at variance with the definition under the African traditional setting where attainment of a particular age is not the only way in which the duration of childhood can be measured. Factors such as the ability to perform certain feats functions such as initiation rites are the more important considerations in African communities. In Africa traditional setting childhood has no fix age. In African tradition a definition of a child is determined by a quality or fact as opposite to CRC definition of a child. African customary law is recognised as law in all African states alongside the received CRC. This makes difficult some of African countries to practice and enforce the laws of CRC.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Right to education article 28 of CRC, Education is a means by which most economically and socially marginalized children and adults in African can lift themselves out of poverty.[[20]](#footnote-20) Therefore article 28 makes compulsory primary education for children by the member states. However most African countries are not providing freed primary education for children. For instance, South Sudan does not provide free universal primary education to children, parents have to pay fees for their children to be enrolled in primary schools.

Although Article 28 of CRC emphasize free and compulsory primary education to all, in most African countries girl child education is not encouraged and pregnant girls drop out of school and their education terminates. In other words, pregnant girls have a right to education after giving birth as pregnancy does not extinguish the child’s opportunity of having access to education. In keeping with its resolve to promote African culture. Most parents prefer sending the boys to school and keep the girls at home for domestic work. For example, among the cattle keepers like Dinka tribe in South Sudan, it is the work of boys to look after cows in cattle camp. They prefer to send the boys to cattle camp than to schools.

The CRC does not call for corporal punishment or disciple at school through beating of children. However, in most African countries and in traditional African culture corporal punishment are ways of administering discipline among children. However, some African countries have enacted laws banning corporal punishment for example South African enacted it in 1996.

Article 3 of CRC talks of best interest of the child which gives a right for a child to be heard. To ensure the child’s right to be heard, the CRC grants the child the right to freedom of expression and also the right to be heard in matters affecting his/her welfare. It should be noted that all these can only be demanded by the child if she/he has at least basic education, also the child’s right to survival such as provision of adequate nutritious food and clean drinking water can only be recognised or learnt through provision and access to basic education.

Article 24 CRC obligates that; countries recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and state parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services. [[21]](#footnote-21) The article requires state parties to take measures to address particular health issues, such as reducing infant mortality, ensure provision of adequate nutrition and safe water, appropriate health care for expectant mothers among several others. However, it is very difficult for many African countries to provide good health coverage especially for children due to limited resources and bad government policies towards health services.

Children in Africa are engaged in the worst forms of child labour, particularly in agriculture and domestic service. Children also work as hawkers, carrying heavy loads and the female ones are vulnerable to sexual abuse and sexually transmitted diseases. Poverty remains one of the key factors pushing children to work in Africa as children need to bring in additional income into the family to augment the parents’ income. In most African countries like South Sudan where most households depend on agriculture for their livelihood, children are engaged in farming activities as early as ten years.

Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect). Abuse means any unlawful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental or sexual injury or harm that causes or likely to cause the child’s physical, mental or emotional health to be significantly impaired.94Child abuse and neglect rob so many children of their childhood and their sense of security and well-being. In Africa, children are exposed to some form of physical, sexual and psychological abuse in the home, school and community.

In Conclusion, The UN Convention on the right of children has been taken into consideration to protect children and their right. Though many Countries are exercising it to make sure children have rights in their communities and their rights are heard and put into practice but in South Sudan though the UN Convention has been taken and read, still children face violence and challenged in the faces of crisis and abused of their right due to the continues wars that are nonstop causing a lot of challenges to the children such as school dropout due to lack of school materials, food and poor parental care. Poor Nutritional status due to lack of food, hence depriving them of their rights in the communities.

5. **Cases of sexual violence have been on the rise either from relatives, caregivers, host community and even from the security forces in times of crises. Presented with a case of sexual molestation for a minor, discuss how you will handle it citing relevant acts that will guide you in coming up with a decision**.

Child Sexual Abuse according to World Health Organization defines child sexual abuse as “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society”[[22]](#footnote-22). This may include; the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices and the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

Sexual abuse can be directly or indirectly disclosed by the survivor or the child. Mostly children do not disclose sexual abuse due to many reasons such as fears of consequence, fear of dismissal of their case by the elders who may not believe them, sometimes the perpetrator may bribe the child with gifts not to disclose, self-blame, under age children may be unaware that they have experience sexual abuse and physical or mental disability among other reasons.

This is caused by perpetuators who might employers, employees, friends, relatives, religious leaders, health workers, neighbours and combatants. Girls are up to three times more likely than boys to experience sexual violence. The majority of perpetrators of sexual violence are men[[23]](#footnote-23). The occurrence of sexual violence in the home is increasingly acknowledged.

An overview of studies in 21 countries found that 7–36 % of women and 3–29% of men reported sexual victimization during childhood. Most of the abuse occurred within the family circle.[[24]](#footnote-24)Children vulnerable to sexual abuse are those who have physical or mental disabilities, those in internal displaced or refugees camps, those who are unaccompanied or separated from their families during conflicts, or those who live on streets, in a residential care centres or in abusive families.

According to survey conducted in Western African Schools, there were evidence of sexual violence, harassment or sexual relationships between teachers and pupils. For instance in Niger in interviews conducted with 50 teachers and 174 students, 47.7% of students had observed teachers express feelings of love for a fellow student, while 88% of teachers responded that there were sexual incidents, of varying natures, between students and teachers at their school.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The following are the most common physical signs of sexual abuse:

* Pain, discoloration, sores, cuts, bleeding or discharges in genitals, anus or mouth;
* Persistent or recurring pain during urination and/or bowel movements;
* Wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to bathroom training;
* Weight loss or weight gain;
* Lack of personal care.

Therefore the following are some of the ways I will handle a case of sexual molestation for a minor.

First of all, I will apply the guiding principle of working with the survivor or minor which include, Confidentiality. This means that information will be shared only with others who need to know in order to provide assistance and intervention, or as requested and agreed by the survivor. All written information will be maintained in secure, locked files/cabinets (if available). Respect I have to respect the rights, wishes and the dignity of the survivor. And also ensure the safety and security of the survivor.

* I will refer the child survivors to any nearest center with case management services because the caseworkers have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and tools to provide child centred case management. Reporting suspected or actual cases of sexual abuse is very sensitive and the report should be handled in the safest and most discrete manner possible according local authorities and reporting systems are established and functioning. Caseworker should make a mandatory reporting whether written or verbal within 24 to 48 hours.
* I will be ensuring that actions taken on behalf of child survivors are in their best interest is the child. Determining which courses of action are in the best interest of a particular child requires determining factors such as: 1) a careful evaluation of the child’s situation; 2) meaningful discussion with the child and caregivers about what they believe is in the child’s best interest; and 3) seeking the least harmful course of action.
* I will refer the survivors to specialized care and treatments services through the health providers who have knowledge, skills, attitudes and tools to provide specialized medico-legal care for child survivors.
* Refer the child to health and psychosocial service providers to coordinate care according to Best Practice. Service providers have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and tools to use referral pathways, reporting agreements and information sharing protocols

Secondly I will handle sexual abuse through awareness-raising; communication of messages to change behaviours; training; the struggle against poverty especially in grassroots communities; implementation of laws and legislation in order to improve the situation of sexual violence in the communities. The following will be the strategies and channels of awareness raising;

* Training teachers:Given the powerful influence that teachers have in shaping children’s values and modelling acceptable adult behaviour, ensuring that teachers understand the root causes and ways to address school violence is of critical importance. Programmes should include ‘train the trainer’ initiatives focusing on teachers’ attitudes and equipping teachers with the necessary skills to serve as positive role models.
* Strengthen youth civil society organizations so that they might advocate against sexual abuse and violence at school more effectively. Encourage and assist local support groups/civil society orgs attempting to tackle sexual violence and support/strengthen national civil society groups’ capacities for networking and advocacy.
* Train female police officers so that girls feel more comfortable reporting cases of abuse as in Rwanda and pro-child police training modules as in Uganda, develop programmes to rehabilitate young sexual offenders.

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