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twelve reasons why it is important

six ways to make it work



1612 says our rights count no matter what

The text in this publication was created through a project organized by Children/Youth as Peacebuilders (CAP) to support youth engagement on UN SC 1612.

The project, which proved to be a great success, was based primarily in Colombia and Northern Uganda. The CAP Colombia Network carried out activities in Barranquilla, Bogotá, Ibaque, Medellín, Ocaña, Northern Cauca (indigenous communities), Pereira, Putumayo and Soacha. This included art and educational workshops, video production, street theatre and surveys. In Gulu District, CAP Uganda organized school debates, radio talk shows and drama/large group mobilizations.

This publication provides a forum for children and youth views on 1612 through examples of artwork, writing and discussions produced in the project's activities. We hope it will stimulate other groups to continue this work.

Please see www.youthaction1612.org for more information.

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UN Security Council Resolution 1612

UN Security Council Resolution 1612 was adopted in July 2005. It was created to honour international and national responsibilities to provide a minimal level of protection for children living inside civil wars. The realization of 1612 requires cooperation amongst many groups, governments and UN agencies.

This partnership also includes children and youth – in many ways this is their resolution. And just as duty bearers have an obligation to protect young people, so do they have the responsibility and capacity to uphold the importance of these rights for their lives.

Human rights require community.

Rather than talking about “my rights” we should be talking about “our rights.” Our interaction with others creates their idea and meaning. A person only has rights to the extent that others are prepared to recognize these claims and act on the responsibilities that flow from this. In conflict countries, this is complex and difficult, particularly for young people vulnerable to powerful and ruthless forces.

The following text offers a road map of this world. It recognizes war’s destructive power. It understands that there are no miracles around the corner, that it is necessary to work hard to accomplish the smallest of goals. But it also appreciates the value of collective actions to effect positive change.

For young people, UN SC 1612 is both a symbol and a tool to make this happen.

1. It stands up for our rights.

- ◆ “We need to protect each other. We need to understand that we have the right to this protection. This is the first step. Then we can take leadership to raise awareness about the practice and respect for our rights.”
- ◆ “We saw that suffering and mistreatment of children can be prevented. So we were particularly happy.”

Protection is the synonym of life.

- ◆ “It is about self respect. We, as young people, need to see that our rights are just as valuable as the rights of those around us, those who try to dictate to us. This is the foundation for our new beginning.”
 - ◆ “It is important to recognize that the life that we deserve is a dignified life.”
 - ◆ “And we saw that children have the right to school and the right to health.”
 - ◆ “This can’t be just an abstract thing, an exercise. We have to see 1612 as an opportunity for real action, a tool to make us more effective in promoting human rights and also in developing young people’s understanding of the value of these rights.”
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The language of war

Threats, blackmail, manipulation
Deceit and false promises.

Enticing boys:
Dreams of money
Dreams of overcoming their reality.

A language of permanent threats:
Keeping you on the run.

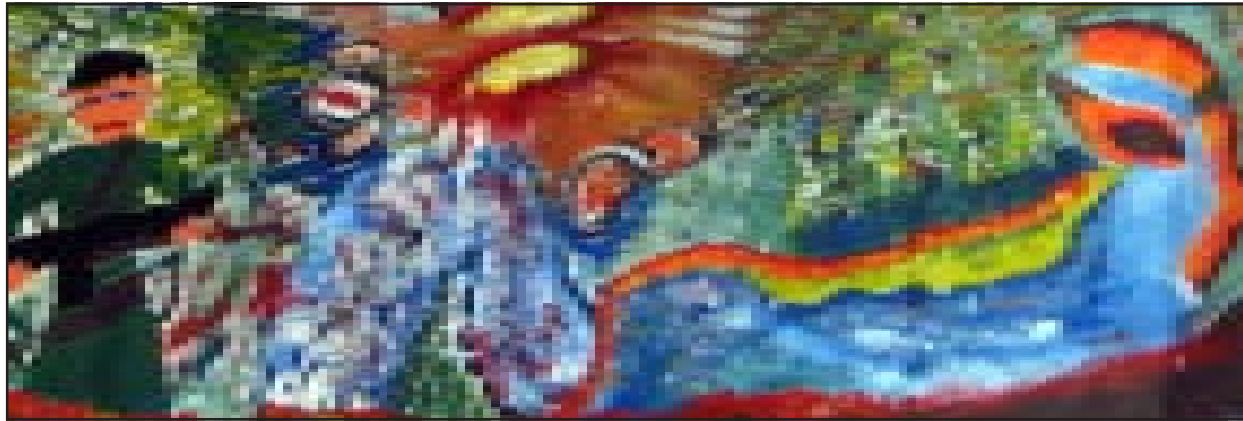
I manage your life
I control your actions.



2. It relates directly to our experiences.

- “It is an unbalanced life with no border. So you get fragile in your thoughts and your feelings. You can lose your head, maybe do something that wouldn’t be right and that’s not good for you. You get to the stage where you see everybody as an enemy because they are forcing you to be a certain way. You don’t know if you should fight against this, join them or just be indifferent.”
 - ◆ In a country where a child is taught to use a gun before learning to read, boys and girls are easy targets. They can be used as combatants in a senseless war.

We have been invaded by fear. How do we respond to this? How can we overcome this fear?
 - ◆ “You can feel an emptiness inside and a loneliness. So many things have happened, so many problems continue. It can seem like there are no solutions and that no one really wants to solve these problems.”
 - ◆ “My friend and I spend all day on the street corner. We just stand there. That is what we used to do in our villages and that is what we like to do here. But you have to be careful. Last time they came and got me. It was because I have an African hairstyle. They beat me in the head so much I had to go to the hospital - 15 stitches.”
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“We left the house because they burned it. And they killed my grandparents on me and we couldn’t say anything because if we did they would have killed the whole family.”

“The soldiers raped 12 year old girls whenever they felt like it.”

“We left our home because they wouldn’t leave us alone. They hanged my mother and threw my one year old brother in the river. So we ran away so they couldn’t kill us too.”

3. It breaks the silence on the violation of our rights.



- “So many people have been assassinated and we have all been silent. We need to fight against this silence and value our memories. This is important because we cannot build our country, build peace, if we do not talk about what has happened to us and weep for the pain inside us.”
- ◆ “The bad people - they have to realize that they are doing something terrible and that they are making many people suffer.”

***Truth- for what? What are we supposed to do with the truth?
A lot of people really do not want to know the truth.***

- ◆ “As young people we have to stand up for the stories of our lives. Many want to ignore this reality - they refuse to confront it. But in doing that we are denying how the war has gone through our lives. We can find ourselves in our stories and the histories of others. This can help us to understand war and what has happened in our country and to our country.”
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“They abducted me when I was in the garden weeding.”

“We were sleeping in the house with friends.”

“They came to the door.”

“I had just finished getting water.”

“I was sweeping the compound.”

“I was on my way to school - there I am with my schoolbag.”

**4. It says “no” to the abduction of children.
5. It says “no” to the use of children as soldiers.**

- ◆ “You find that children are abducted to be used as soldiers and yet they don’t know anything about war. They don’t know how to use the machines for fighting and they end up being killed. The UN Resolution says that the children should not be abducted and used as soldiers.”
- ◆ “We see the multiplication of violence: young people forced to line up with this group or that; death of civilians by the hands of these groups; killing of university leaders and legal groups – so-called revolutionaries. Rigid codes of behavior – how we must think, act and be.”

Here you will find that when you go to study in school the rebels will come and abduct you.

- ◆ “You find that some children make friends with children who are related to abductors. And these children will deceive their friends. And that child who is related to abductors will be paid money and that child who was deceived will be abducted.”
 - ◆ “We need to explain our feelings and yearnings so others can appreciate our situations, particularly about being forced into the armed groups. Then maybe they will respond with understanding and help us.”
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“I was abducted in the morning when I was on my way to school. I was twelve years old.

For the training, it was three months. They did not divide according to ages, but the girls are trained different. At first I was in the support group, we sit by the heavy guns. Then they trained us how to assemble the guns, how to shoot, how to plant land mines, how to do ambushes.

After we practiced for a while, they picked me out, and some others, and they took us to train on the big guns. They took us to another place far from where the others were training.

So we were in an isolated place, in the mountains, we stayed there. Food was given once a day, but very little. And there you have to sleep there, without covering, and it’s very cold. So we were growing hair on our bodies.

When we finished the training, they called us soldiers.”

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- 6. It says “no” to killing and maiming of children.**
 - 7. It says children should have access to schools and humanitarian assistance.**
 - 8. It says ‘no” to sexual violence against us.**
-



“Removing blouses is a common thing. You do that when you line up, after you have been abducted. They take the girls and have them line up for the officers.

They say – “ This one, this one “ - they pick the ones that are the prettiest. Also the ones whose breasts are straight out. They say that this proves that you are fresh.

And also in the battlefield - you go without your blouse. They say that you will stay pure, be a better fighter.”

When speaking about the promise of life

Of possibilities for development and change,

Girls, boys and young people talk from fear and terror,
About what should or should not happen.
They speak from a position of confusion.

Ambivalence:

To act in violence or to renounce these ways?
What are our beliefs, our discourses for reflecting truth?

The truth of our actions
The truth of our feelings.
What is right, what is authentic?

New languages are required for these realities.

9. It is an excellent tool for human rights education.

- ◆ “I noted that as we went to the community that people were eager to learn about the Resolution, to know about how problems for children develop and what they can do to prevent them.”
- ◆ “People really have to sensitized on the meaning of human rights. Many children are being abused, their rights are being violated. That affects their learning – if they are being tortured at home then it shows at school.”

**I think that the key is not how we continue a project called 1612–
it is how we continue with the topic of human rights.**

- ◆ “You can tell that people are almost afraid to think about human rights because when you start talking to them they say that they don’t have time.”
 - ◆ “I think that people don’t even want to know what human rights are. Maybe this is because these violations have happened so often that it has become normal for them.”
 - ◆ “When we established our core team our first task was to think about this resolution. Why is it important? How is it relevant to our situation? Then we designed methods that would work with other young people especially those with little knowledge about human rights. For us this was exciting. Many young people wanted to continue this work.”
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School Debate Winners, Gulu Primary School, Northern Uganda

“I’ve seen from the debates that the young people, after participating, at least now they have information and I could see that they were thinking, “Surely I do have rights and whenever someone does something to me, that I have somewhere that I can report this and that I have the right not to be treated this way.”

“Seeing the debates that we had in school, it is really so important that we involve these young people - for them to speak about their rights and how their rights have been violated and how actually they can prevent these problems from happening to them.

“In our school debates we learned that UN Resolution 1612 tells us very well about our rights. It makes the community aware of our rights. It says that children should not be used in anyway by others, so that we also can have the future. “

10. It is an important focus for upholding our rights.

- ◆ “All children should know about 1612. It is our responsibility to make sure that happens. If we don’t it would be like we were pretending we never knew about it. We would be letting it be lost as an opportunity – not just for us, but for other children as well.”
- ◆ “As young men and women we are the sons and daughters of the war, for us, this situation has become natural, we are inside the war but we are not aware of it until one of our loved ones is assassinated.”

It is difficult for us to talk about human rights. It is also a paradox to live in a democracy where to talk about human rights makes us afraid.

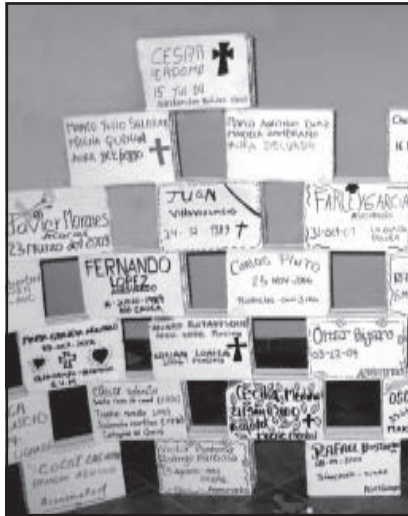
- ◆ “Because of their history young people often don’t realize that they can contribute. They just know a situation where all they have to do is obey. So they need to learn that they can do this. We need to create new mentalities about participation – both our knowledge of it and also our capacity to do it in a responsible manner.”
 - ◆ “For me to tell the story of my family helps people to understand. Yes it is difficult because I loved my older brother. And also about how my fingers were cut. No one is going to feel happy about that. My brother died but I’m not going to die. I want people to understand what we must do to get over these obstacles, not to drown in the sorrow of it.”
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11. It promotes community partnerships & understanding.

- ◆ “When we young men and women when we go on to the streets, we feel people become more aware; people ask us who we are, what we are doing. Others begin to speak to us, saying that the same thing happened in their family. For this reason we believe it is time to speak out, it is not the moment to keep quiet.”
- ◆ “This should not be limited to our country. Instead we should make connections with young people in other part of the world so that all of us are working inside the same framework and learning from each other.”

***UN SC 1612 has something very interesting.
It offers a framework for civil society and the state to talk to each other.***

- ◆ “It is important to point out that there are people who not only don’t recognize how to protect young people but also don’t understand the very fact of their vulnerability. Taking the lack of information into account on the one hand, and the lack of interest on the other, it is very few who are serious about spaces of protection.”
 - ◆ “We need to strengthen our capacity to read the context and to share this knowledge with others. This will help realize our objectives for social justice.”
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“We place the names of people on the blocks; we name the young people who have been killed in this war.

We need to think about our response to this loss.

Yes, the State is responsible, but so is the entire country... you, your mother, your father, me... we are all responsible for what has happened.

And all of us need to repair not only the material damage but also recognize ourselves in this history and help out so that the wounds of the heart are healed, so history does not repeat itself, and so we can become a less violent country”.



12. It gives us hope.

- ◆ “The resolution, it is really very important, in that children know that people in the world do care about them and feel concerned about them. You know all the difficulties we have gone through but when important organizations like the UN show they really care about us, it makes us feel better.”
- ◆ “I also call on the international community. Because sometimes we bring the information, sometimes if the government is in the wrong, they may not take our information seriously. So I want to appreciate and hope that if we provide this information to UNICEF and other organizations that they will help with these points and for us to move out of these problems.”

***As young people, we can be the builders of pathways and hope.
Perhaps we can sow a seed, so that those who come after us
don't have such a difficult time as we have experienced.***

- ◆ “We have to think of how each of us can awaken the consciousness of others. And the possibilities if those people do the same thing to more people. Because we are all connected – if we look at the planet from above and could see all these links maybe we could see how change can occur.”
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Six ways to make it work

1. Ensure that young people have an active role in the promotion of UN SC 1612 as a mechanism to uphold children's rights.
2. Develop partnerships and plans of action amongst youth groups, government, community organizations and UN agencies to ensure that 1612's prevention, monitoring and reporting functions are fully realized. Ensure that local groups are equal partners.
3. Develop reporting strategies that focus on country and regional situations rather than individual cases.
4. Enhance 1612's preventative capacities by using it as a tool to assess children's rights in pre/post conflicts as well as in war situations.
5. Ensure that all six violations receive equal attention in terms of monitoring and reporting. Adjust procedures and practices to respond to special country circumstances.
6. Integrate UN SC 1612 inside wider plans to protect human rights.





Children/Youth as Peacebuilders

CAP is an international organization dedicated to the rights of young people living in conflict situations and in their participation in peacebuilding; the promotion of their rights; prevention of sexual violence and the reconciliation of their experiences of war.

CAP works with young people and their organizations in Cambodia, Northern Uganda, Colombia, and refugees from Burma. We plan to expand to other countries in the near future.

For more information on CAP:

www.childrenyouthaspeacebuilders.ca

For more information relating to CAP's work on UN SC 1612:

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Canada

“We, as young people, need to see that our rights are as valuable as the rights of those around us. This is the foundation of our new beginning.”

