

# UNICEF at Work in War-Affected Countries

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## Afghanistan

War has gone on in Afghanistan for over 20 years. Following military action by the United States in 2001, a new government was formed. By 2002, 3 million children who had been out of school returned to classes. Of these, 30% were girls, who had not been allowed to go to school under the Taliban government. In 2007, about 6 million children were in school and nearly 40% of them were girls.

But armed conflict continues. In August 2006, UNICEF reported an increasing number of attacks on schools, including one missile attack, 11 explosions, 50 school burnings, and 37 threats against schools and communities. Six children have died as a result of the violence. Schools are beginning to close, shutting out an estimated 100,000 children.

UNICEF is working with Afghanistan's religious and community leaders to raise awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls. When attacks on schools occur, UNICEF provides classroom tents, teaching materials, blackboards, chalk and floor mats, in order to help schools open again as quickly as possible. It also works with the government on rebuilding schools and is helping to train 50,000 teachers in all subjects, including landmine awareness.

Over 25% of children in Afghanistan die before the age of five. UNICEF is working to immunize more than 4 million children under the age of five against measles, a leading cause of death. It also aims to immunize 4.2 million women against tetanus, which kills mothers and babies during childbirth. UNICEF is setting up health clinics and going door-to-door with immunizations in hard-to-reach parts of the country where travel is still dangerous because of armed conflict.

UNICEF is working with the government to help children orphaned by war. It is setting up day care centers, counseling, care homes for children without parents, educational opportunities and job training.

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Source: adapted from, and for more information on UNICEF's work in Afghanistan, visit:

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_35890.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_35890.html)

[http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_33948.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_33948.html)

<http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/e0973unicef.pdf>

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## Colombia

Forty years of conflict between the government and militias have caused many problems for Colombia's children. In the past 15 years, three million people (75% of them women and children) have had to leave their homes due to violence, lack safe water, health care and education. Despite a law that states children under age 18 cannot be part of the army, there are still 6,000 to 7,000 child soldiers in militias. Landmines are found not only in combat zones, but in school yards, near water sources and on rural roads. Landmines kill at least three people in Colombia each day.

UNICEF and its partners have:

- Provided emergency assistance—food, health kits and shelter—to thousands of people who have had to leave their homes because of violence.
- Helped to repair water and sanitation systems damaged by conflict and set up water and sanitation systems in areas where people are living in camps.
- Built schools in conflict-affected areas, giving thousands of out-of-school children the chance to continue their education.
- Worked with child soldiers. After getting them out of the armed forces, UNICEF has provided sports and other programs to over 19,000 children who used to be soldiers, giving them a new way of life. UNICEF helps them get shelter, job training, education, health care, counseling, legal protection and other services that help them re-join their communities.
- Educated tens of thousands of children on how to avoid landmine-related injuries. UNICEF also helped disabled landmine survivors by providing them with education, job training and other kinds of support needed to live in communities.
- Trained hundreds of teachers and therapists to provide psychological support for over 15,000 children who have been emotionally harmed by violence.

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Source: adapted from, and for more information on UNICEF's work in Colombia, visit:

<http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/colombia.html>

[http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Armed\\_Groups.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Armed_Groups.pdf)

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## Lebanon

During the conflict between Israel and Lebanon in the summer of 2006, UNICEF worked to get supplies to war-affected Lebanese families. Supplies included health kits, mattresses, blankets, buckets and soap. Water and sanitation systems were damaged during the war and UNICEF provided bottled water and water purification kits. UNICEF is now working to set up large water tanks that will replace the use of bottled water.

UNICEF also provided essential medicines. It started an immunization campaign aimed at protecting children, many of them living in crowded shelters, from measles.

In addition, UNICEF provided games and sports equipment for children who had to leave their homes and were living in shelters, which offered little opportunities for play.

Following the cease-fire, it is estimated that up to 50 schools were destroyed and 300 were damaged. UNICEF is working to re-open damaged schools, providing supplies, teaching materials and helping with the re-building. Not only do schools provide children education, they give them the feeling that life is returning to normal.

Counseling groups are being set up to help children deal with the stress of losing their homes or family members. These groups will provide sports, art and other activities that will help children express their feelings and identify children who may need extra counseling.

UNICEF is also working to inform adults and children about the danger of landmines and unexploded munitions.

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Source: adapted from, and for more information on UNICEF's work in Lebanon, visit:

[http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index\\_35145.html](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_35145.html)

[http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index\\_35640.html](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_35640.html)

[http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index\\_35455.html](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_35455.html)

[http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index\\_35274.html](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_35274.html)

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## Timor-Lesté (formerly East Timor)

On May 20, 2002, Timor-Lesté (or East Timor) became the world's newest country. This followed a long struggle for independence from Indonesia that damaged up to 70% of all buildings in the country. Health services were heavily damaged during the conflict and many children in Timor-Lesté suffer from malnutrition and die at an early age. Immunization rates are low. At the time of independence, only 20% of people living outside of cities had safe water, and only 10% had good sanitation facilities. Nearly all schools needed repairs to both the latrines and water systems following the crisis.

Since independence, UNICEF has worked to increase immunization rates, improve nutrition, provide water and sanitation to villages and schools, and improve the quality of schools. However, in the summer of 2006, new conflict broke out. Many people in the capital city, Dili, left and are living in camps, where many children are malnourished.

UNICEF is providing food to children in camps who are malnourished. It is also providing water, water containers and water purification tablets to camps.

In addition, emergency classes have been set up for children who had to leave school. UNICEF is providing support to schools in rural areas that are overcrowded because of children escaping Dili.

Music, dance and art activities have been planned in camps to help children cope with stress. Kits providing games and sports equipment give children something positive to do with their time.

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Source: adapted from, and for more information on UNICEF's work in Timor-Lesté, visit:  
[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste\\_35194.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste_35194.html)  
[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste\\_34806.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste_34806.html)  
[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste\\_34712.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste_34712.html)