



**Children in Armed Conflict**  
"Rights, Health and Wellbeing"  
American University of Beirut, Lebanon  
Saint Joseph University in Beirut (preconference)



**Hacettepe  
University**

# Conducting Research in Conflict Zones: Challenges, Methods, Ethics

## *Introductory Keynote*

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Human  
Children

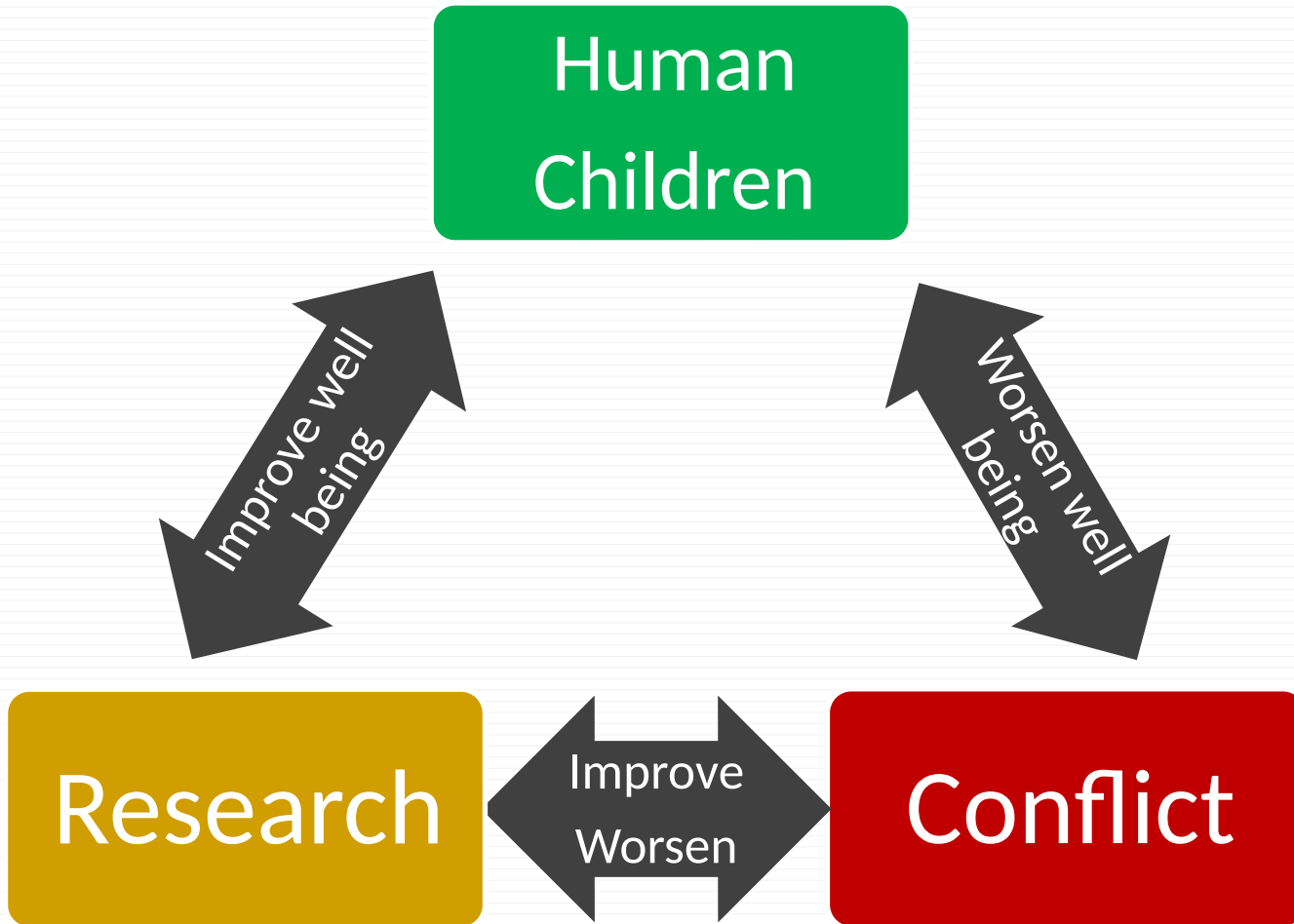
Improve well  
being

Worsen well  
being

Research

Improve  
Worsen

Conflict



# World Recognizes the Importance of Childhood

**1919-1920** «Eglantyne Jebb» Save the Children Fund

& Save the Children International become the International Union

**1924** The League of Nations adopts Declaration of the Rights of the International Union for Child Welfare

**1948** The UN General Assembly Universal Declaration of Human Rights in article 25 to childhood as "entitled to special care and assistance." (192 country ratified)

**1959** The UN General Assembly Declaration of the Rights of the Child

**1979** The UN declares 1979 the International Year of the Child.

**1989** The UN General Assembly unanimously approves

the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which enters into force in 1990. (114 country ratified)

The World Summit for Children is held in New York

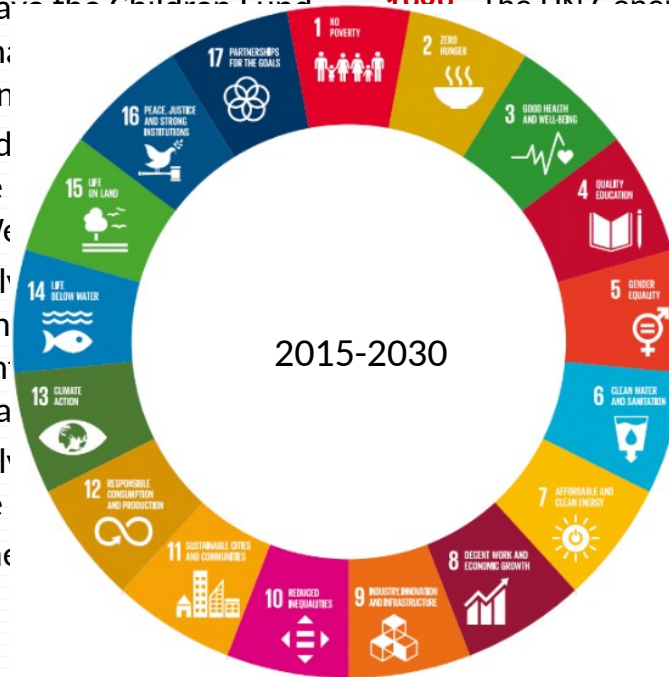
The International Year of the Family reaffirms that governments should support families as they raise their children, rather than provide day care and other services.

The Convention concerning the Prohibition and the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention 182) is adopted.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are adopted, with targets related to children,

including the goal of universal primary education. The UN Assembly holds a Special Session for the first time to specifically

discuss children's issues.



49% decline in the under-5 mortality rate worldwide = **Good Progress**

33% decline in the out-of-school rate worldwide = **Good Progress**

Result: **115 million of school** now than

40% decline worldwide =

25% decline worldwide = **Good Progress**

22% decline in the adolescent birth rate worldwide = **Fair Progress**

Result: **3 million fewer teen births per year** now than in 2000

17% decrease in the child homicide rate worldwide = **Fair Progress**

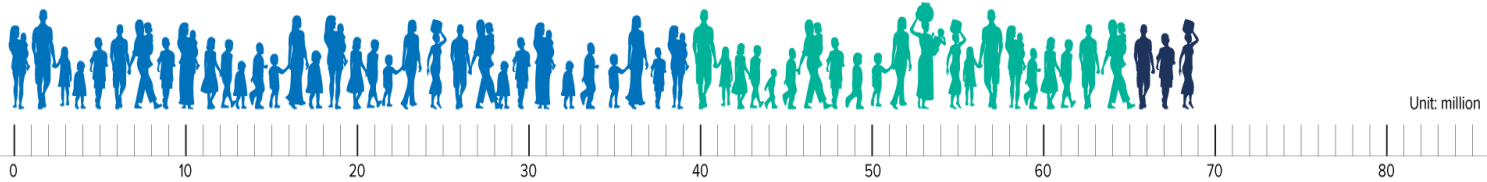
Result: **12,000 fewer children murdered per year** now compared to 2000

80% increase in displacement due to conflict worldwide = **No Progress**

Result: **30.5 million more forcibly displaced people** now than in 2000<sup>188</sup>

# 68.5 million

forcibly displaced people worldwide



Internally Displaced People  
**40 million**

Refugees  
**25.4 million**

19.9 million under UNHCR mandate  
5.4 million Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA

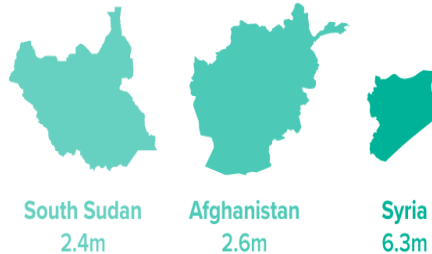
Asylum-seekers  
**3.1 million**

Where the world's displaced people are being hosted

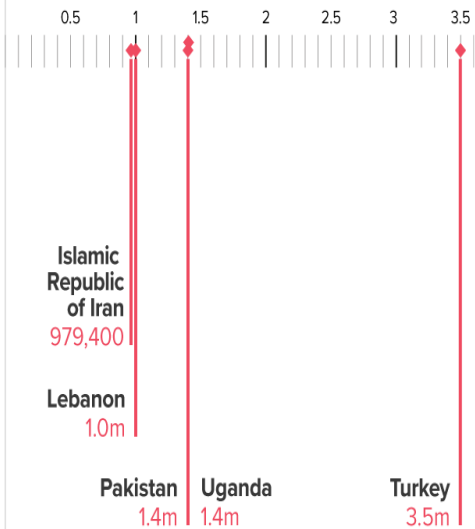


85 per cent of the world's displaced people are in developing countries

**57%** of refugees worldwide came from three countries



Top refugee-hosting countries

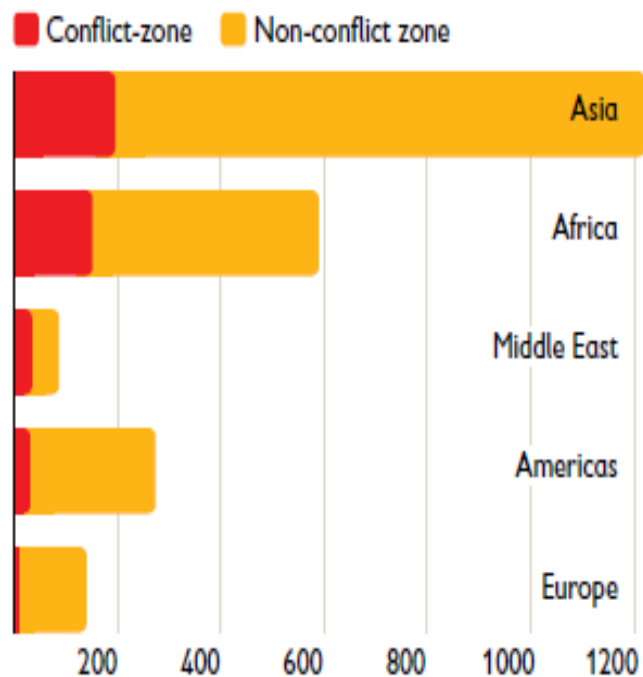


**10 million**  
stateless people



**102,800**  
Refugees resettled

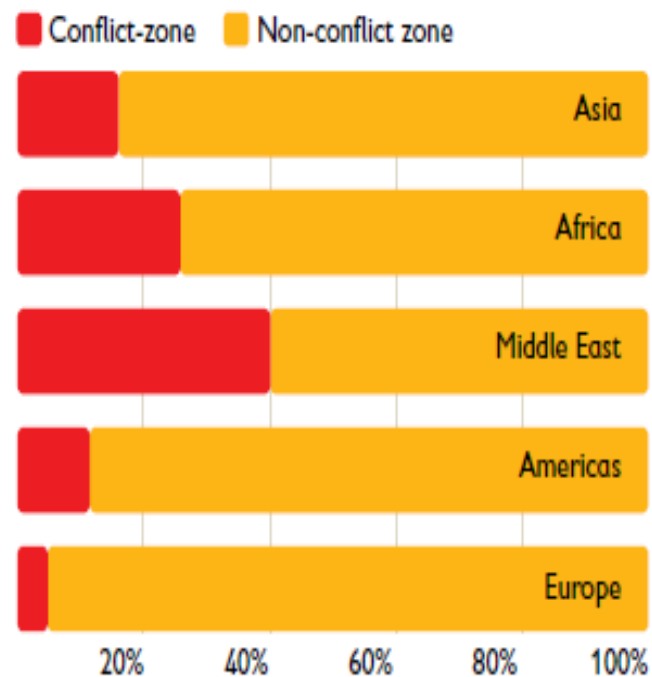
**44,400** people  
a day forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution



**FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF CHILDREN LIVING IN CONFLICT ZONES IN 2017, BY REGION**

195 million children in Asia and 152 million children across Africa are living in a conflict zone

SOURCE: PRIO'S CALCULATION BASED ON UCDP GED DATASET, GRIDDED POPULATION OF THE WORLD V4, (CIESIN, 2016) AND WORLD POPULATION PROSPECTS (UN, 2017)



**FIGURE 3: SHARE OF CHILDREN LIVING IN CONFLICT ZONES IN 2017, BY REGION**

Two in five children in the Middle East and a quarter of children across Africa live in a conflict zone

SOURCE: PRIO'S CALCULATION BASED ON UCDP GED DATASET, GRIDDED POPULATION OF THE WORLD V4, (CIESIN, 2016) AND WORLD POPULATION PROSPECTS (UN, 2017)

# 10 Threats to Global Health in 2019

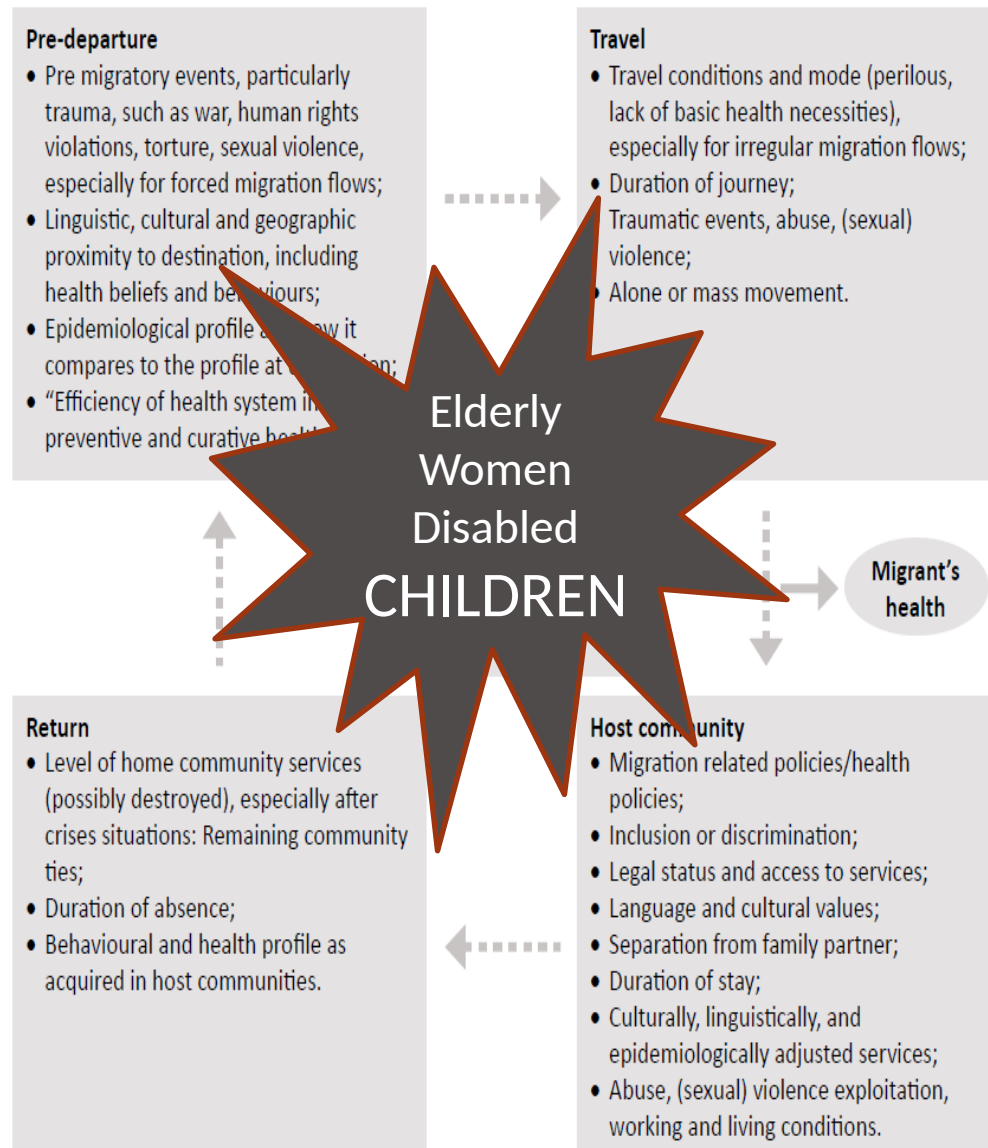
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- Air pollution and climate change
- Noncommunicable diseases
- Global influenza pandemic
- ***Fragile and vulnerable settings***
  - >1.6 billion people (22% of the global population) live in places where protracted crises (through a combination of challenges such as drought, famine, conflict, and population displacement) and weak health services leave them without access to basic care.
  - In almost all regions of the World.
  - Half of the key targets in the SDG are unmet.
- Antimicrobial resistance
- Ebola and other high-threat pathogens
- Weak primary health care
- Vaccine hesitancy
- Dengue
- HIV



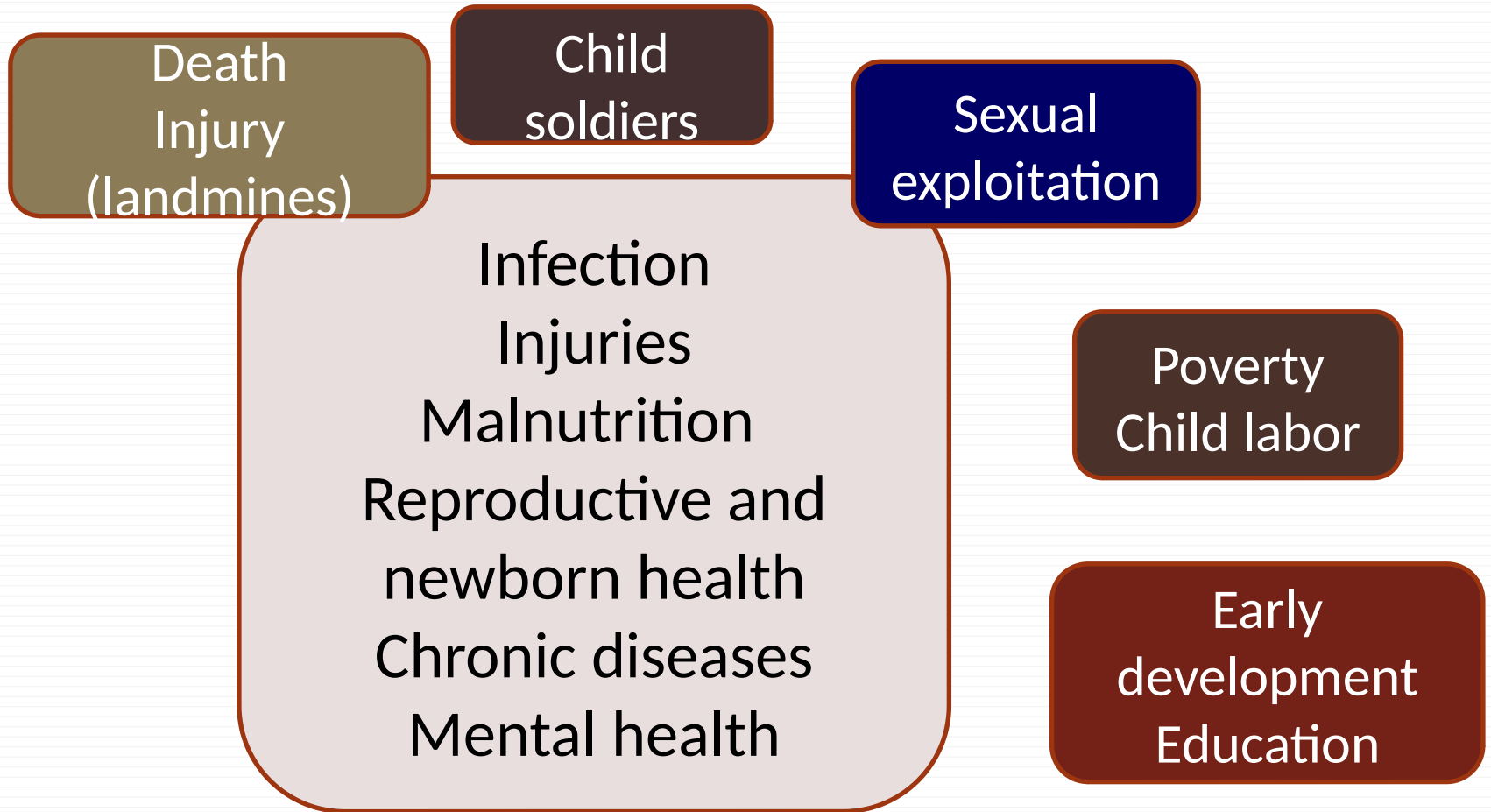
# Conflict, Displacement & Health

Effect on Displaced  
Population  
Effect on Host  
Population



# War, Displacement, Child and Health

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We still do not know how many children are, and have been, killed in conflict globally, how many children are recruited as child soldiers, or how many children are sexually abused in relation to armed conflict. Nor do we have a comprehensive understanding of the many ways in which conflict indirectly impacts children through, for example, malnutrition, disease, reduced educational opportunities, and heightened poverty.

# Effect on Host Community

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“It’s not one thing or another; it’s everything.

The refugee problem is a problem for all of society. The drain on the national economy, the violence and crime, the competition for services, the increased social tensions and public resentment that affects

us »

Education  
Health  
Urban services  
Environment

Human  
Children

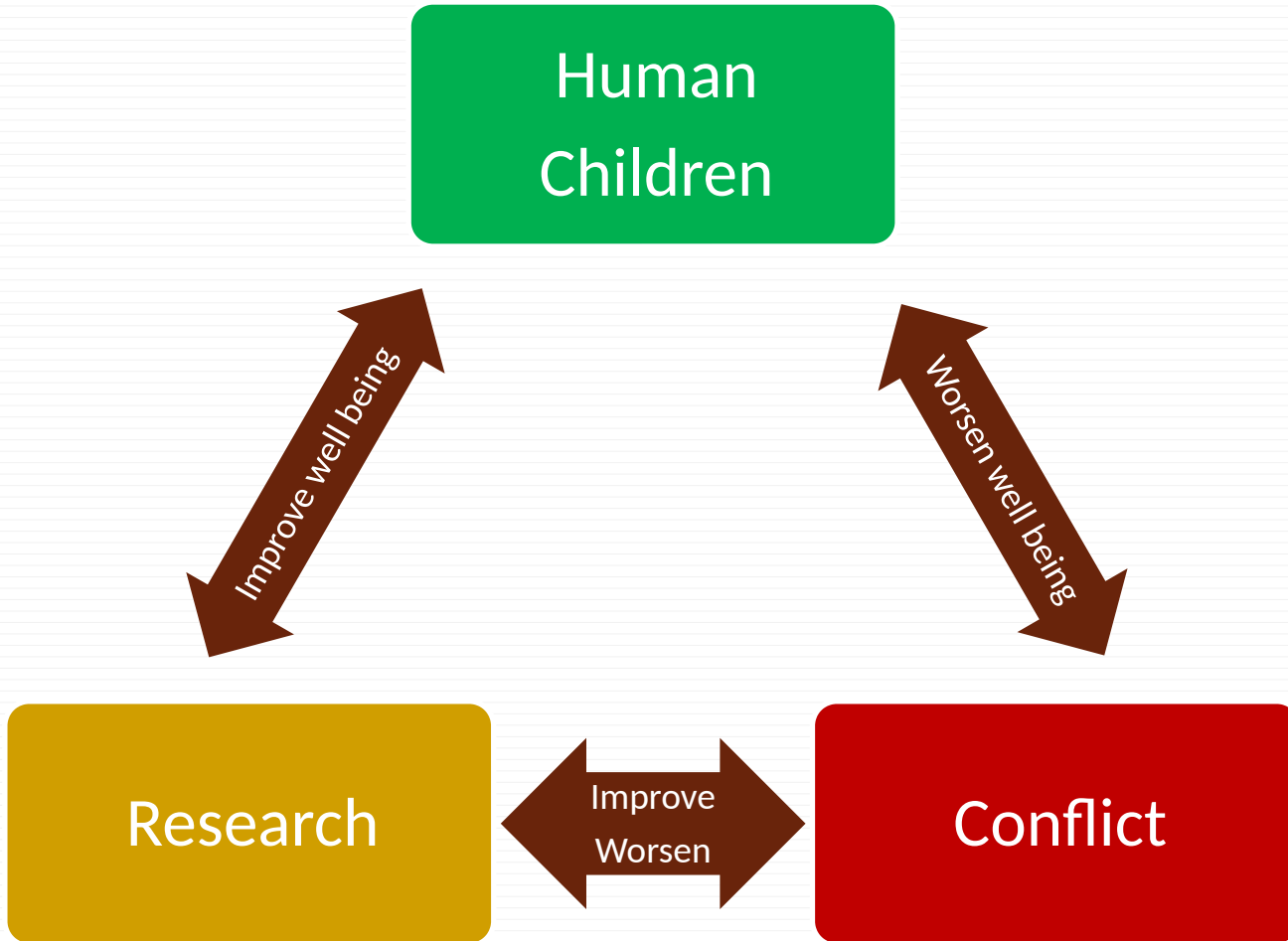
Improve well being

Worsen well being

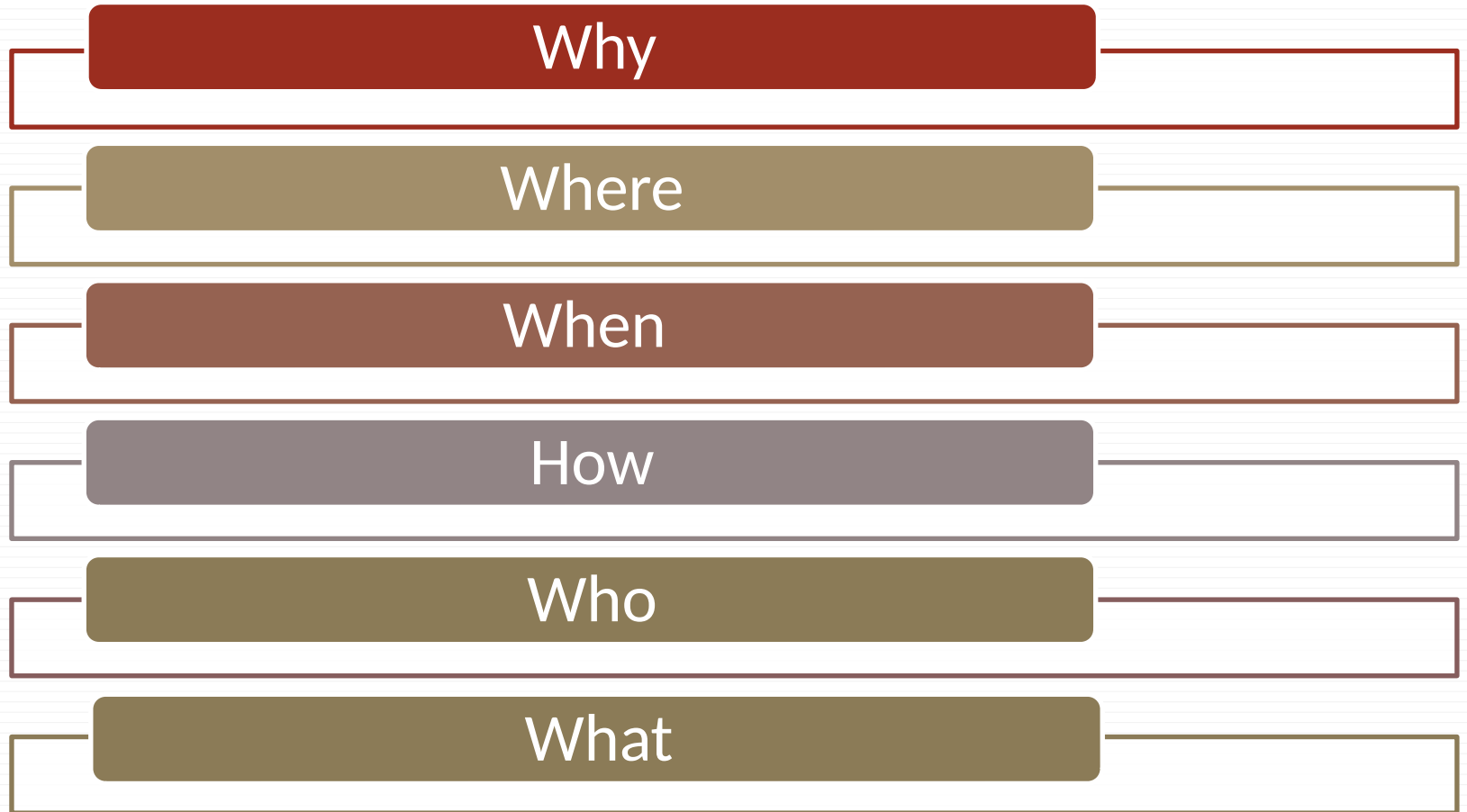
Research

Improve  
Worsen

Conflict



# Research in Conflict Zones



# Why Research in Conflict Zones

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- Document the effects to inform the general public and policy makers about the consequences of armed conflict,
- Provide services to meet the needs of affected populations,
- Protect human rights and document violations of international humanitarian law
- Help to prevent future armed conflict

Not for

Scientific curiosity

Discrimination

Genocide

**CREATE EVIDENCE**

# Research in Conflict Zones

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- ‘No research without action, no action without research’
- Practice-based research: what are the challenges and how can we address them?
- Putting people and change at the heart of research
- Bridging divides

# Scientific Reserach

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- Research Question (What, Where, Who)
- Methodology (How)
- Ethics (How)
- Funding(How, Who)
  - Diverts human and financial resources away from nonmilitary purposes.

# Health Research

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A process that begins with a research question and undertaken to generate new knowledge that will eventually be translated and/or implemented to reduce the existing disease burden (or other health-related problem) in the population

## ***Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (CHNRI)***

# CHNRI Health Research

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“*the four D’s*” – research to achieve

## Description

- Epidemiological research

## Discovery

- Basic «fundamental» research

## Development

- Translational research

## Delivery

- Health policy systems research
- Delivery, operation, implementation

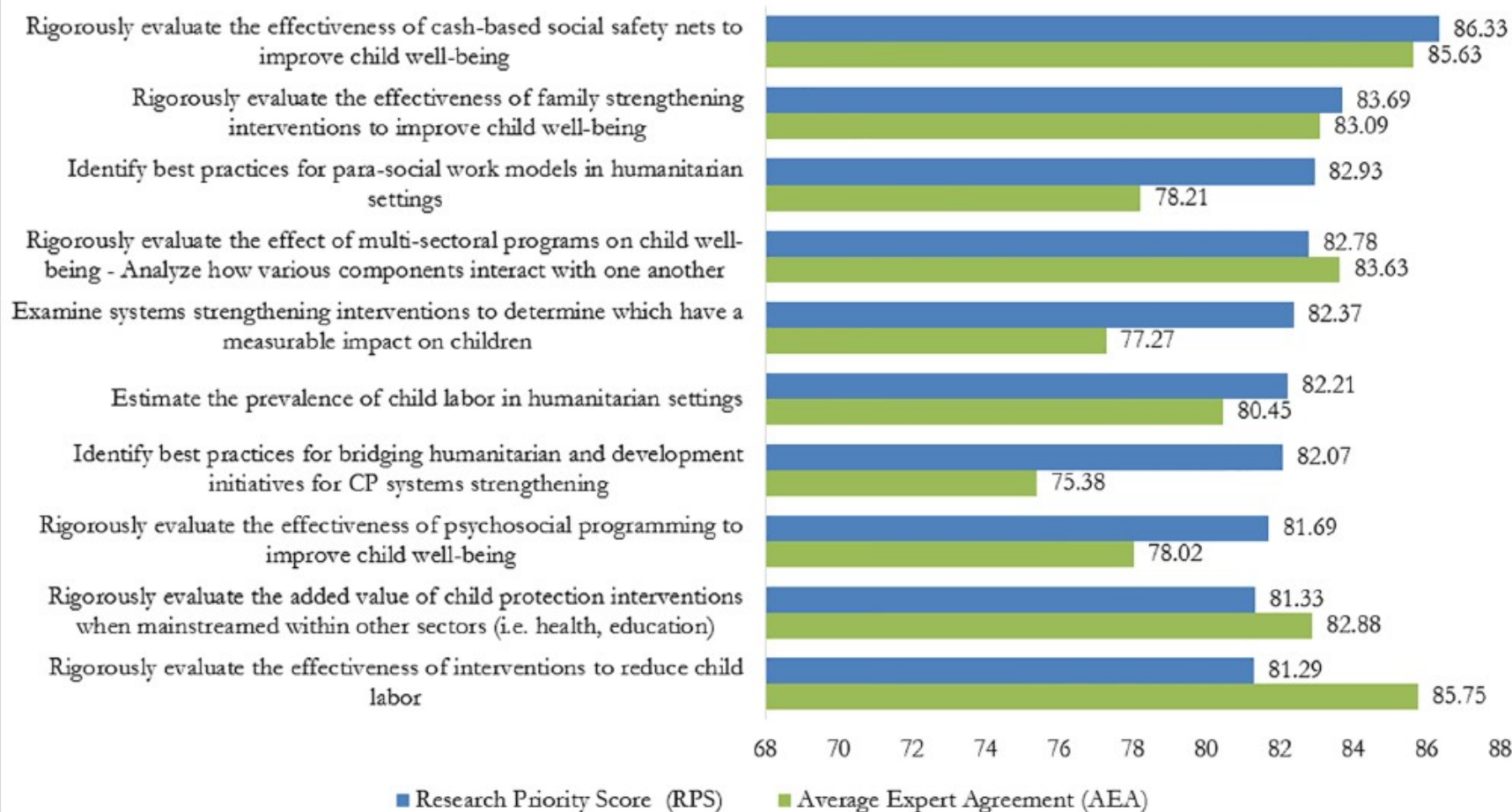
# CHNRI Health Research

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- CHNRI's "standard" set of criteria are
  - (i) answerability,
  - (ii) effectiveness,
  - (iii) deliverability,
  - (iv) the potential for a substantial reduction of disease burden
  - (v) the impact on equity
- Other criteria "low cost", "sustainability", "acceptability", "feasibility", "relevance" and ethical, etc

# CHNRI for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

Top Ten Research Priorities



# CHNRI for Neonatal Survival in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies

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- What strategies are effective in increasing demand for, and use of skilled attendance?
- What is the feasibility, effectiveness and cost of approaches to increase coverage of clean delivery practices in facilities and in homes?
- What is the additional burden of neonatal mortality in different emergency situations (e.g. conflict, acute vs. protracted, natural disaster)?
- Can simplified pregnancy surveillance at community level be used to measure neonatal mortality?
- Can simplified verbal autopsy tools be adapted for use in emergency settings to capture the main causes of neonatal mortality?

# Research Methodology

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- Documentation
  - Surveillance
  - Epidemiological studies
  - Rapid assessment (representative ?)
- Intervention studies

# History of Research Scandals

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- Children
- Elderly
- Disabled
- Prison
- Race
- Immigrant
- War



to be released without  
permission of the Court

© AP

# Ethical Issues

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Some of the ethical issues related to research in  
wartorn areas

- Over-researching of particular conflict-affected populations
- Vulnerability of the researched communities
- Vulnerability of refugees as research subjects
- Need for an ethical code of conduct for research in humanitarian emergencies
- Refugees' capacity to take an active role in research
- Need for the research to be conducted
- Feasibility of doing such research

# Ethical Issues

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- reporting ethical research practices in studies conducted among refugees and war-affected populations in the Arab World between 2000-2013
- institutional approval, access to the community/research site, and informed consent/assent from the research participants, were reported in 48.2, 54.9, and 53.7% of the publications, respectively.
- adherence to ethical research conduct in crisis settings is born by a multitude of stakeholders including funding agencies, institutional research boards, researchers and international relief organizations involved in research, as well as journal editors,

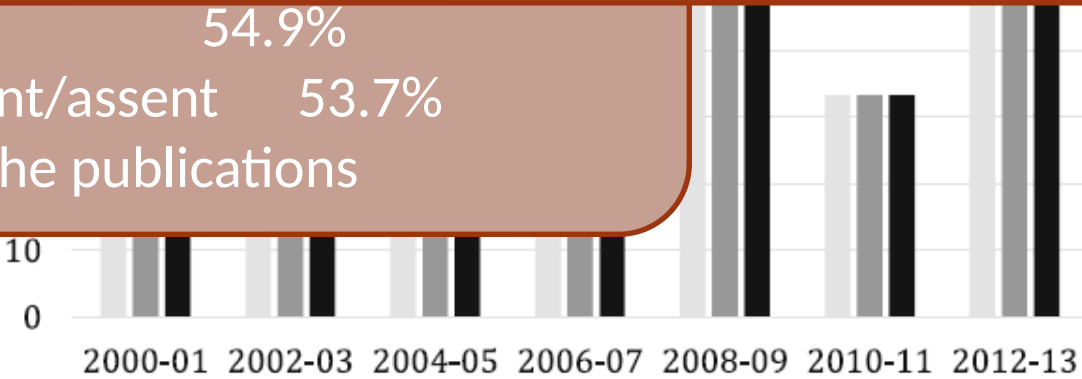
Makhoul et al. BMC Medical Ethics (2018) 19:36

# Reporting of Ethical Research Conduct

## Adherence more

in biomedical research vs social research or public health, when followed the quantitative methodology vs qualitative, when involved international collaboration, when published in journals that require statements on ethical declarations.

ins  
acc  
research site 54.9%  
informed consent/assent 53.7%  
of the publications



■ Institutional approval    ■ Community access    ■ Individual consent and/or assent

# Ethical Issues

Studies between 2004 and 2012 involved the collection of human personal data and/or biosamples from the people of Darfur within or outside Darfur

Online search 68 eligible studies,  
13.2% (9) reported gaining ethical approval  
42.6% (29) informed consent was obtained from the participants.

The CRED search 138 eligible reports.  
None of these reports mentioned gaining ethical approval  
17 (12.3%) mentioned obtaining informed consent from their participants.

# EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Research and Innovation

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## **Guidance note — Research on refugees, asylum seekers & migrants**

- Account their particular vulnerability, apply the following principles whenever your research involves such participants:
- Treat them with **care and sensitivity**
- Be **objective and transparent**
- Avoid **ethnocentricity: show respect for their ethnicity, language, religion, gender and sexual orientation**
- Rigorously safeguard the dignity, wellbeing, autonomy, safety and security of their **family & friends**
- Respect their **values and right to make their own decisions**
- Give special protection to participants with diminished autonomy, such as **unaccompanied minors — for example, by involving NGOs or national authorities (e.g. National Refugee Councils) with relevant experience, to provide legal advice, psychological support, language interpreting and/or legally appointed supervision.**

You must handle appropriately any information you **discover unintentionally that is not related to your research aims, such as:**

- human rights violations (on or by the participants)
- human and sexual trafficking
- domestic violence
- forced marriage
- female genital mutilation
- trading in human organs
- child pornography.

# Challenges

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- Reporting biases, and the fog of war
- Difficulty of access to countries for independent investigators
- War crimes
- Inadequate or absent data systems
- Social breakdown
- Forced migration
- Safety
- Language
- Culture & beliefs



# Research Owner

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Mobilize low and middle-income countries to take more ownership in defining their own research policies, rather than merely being passive recipients of international aid for research and development

# Role of Pediatrician & Pediatric Societies

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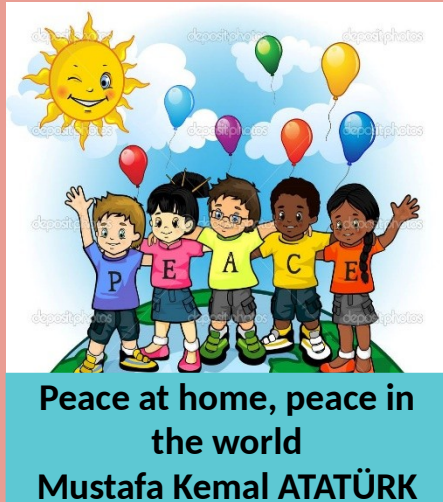
## **Pediatric Society**

- Training
- Research
- Advocacy

## **Pediatrician**

- Service provider
- Research
- Advocacy

# For our children



# For our future