

Key outcomes following the Expert Meeting

“Children Born of War in a Comparative Perspective: State of the Art and Recommendations for Future Research and Policy”

March 3-4, 2016, Cologne¹

On 3-4 March 2016 SINTER University of Cologne in conjunction with GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences hosted a two-day interdisciplinary workshop for the purposes of exchanging knowledge and identifying key areas for further research and policy. In total, 11 participants were in attendance representing expertise from the disciplines of social sciences, law, medicine, public health, history and pedagogy. This document constitutes the outcomes of that meeting. The workshop was very successful and identified priorities for further research and policy in this area. In this document we present a summary of the outcomes of that meeting, in full recognition of the need for further such meetings and research collaborations as this work continues.

”Children Born of War” The phrase **Children Born of War** refers to those children who, in the context of an armed conflict, have a local civilian woman as a mother and are fathered by a foreign soldier, para-military officer, rebel or other person directly participating in hostilities. These children have been born as a result of armed conflicts throughout history. For present purposes the term has been adapted to cater to modern warfare and for that reason we include children born to child soldiers and children fathered by members of a peacekeeping troop.

The situations which lead to the birth of a Child Born of War differ in their nature. During armed conflict, it can be especially difficult to distinguish between voluntary and forced sexual relations. As a consequence, Children Born of War can be the result of intimate relationships but also because of the use of sex as a survival strategy, such as in exchange for goods or money. Conflict-related sexual violence, including gang rape and sexual slavery is prevalent and also results in pregnancies. Sexual violence is used against women and men, girls and boys and as a weapon of war, systematically destroying the communities in which it is perpetrated. Some of the women and girls who have had children as a consequence of these crimes are among the refugees presently seeking security in Europe.

¹ For program and participants at the expert meeting see [here](#). Please use the following reference: *Key outcomes following the Expert Meeting “Children Born of War in a Comparative Perspective: State of the Art and Recommendations for Future Research and Policy”, SINTER University of Cologne and GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, March 2016, Cologne.*

Key outcomes from the expert meeting

The expert meeting recommends that further effort is required in the realms of both politics and research. Below we have separated key points from the expert meeting into two categories. First, we have listed key issues for which resolutions reside with policy-makers. Second we have identified key areas for further research.

The need for political solutions:

- The existence and specific needs of Children Born of War should be openly recognized and addressed within national governments and the international community as a matter of priority.
- Each national government should identify and support national and international organizations which work to protect the wellbeing of children in war and post-war situations.
- The immediate needs of children, including their right to social support, health care, food and shelter, parenting and education must be secured. It is the primary responsibility of the state in which a Child Born of War is physically present to protect his or her fundamental rights.
- Mothers and/or legal guardians of Children Born of War, as well as the children themselves, should be provided with practical support, including legal advice. They should have legal remedies available to ensure that the fathers are held responsible for those children, both legally and financially.
- Securing women's rights will often improve the protection of children. International guidelines are useful to ensure that the rights of the mothers and their children are upheld. However, such guidelines must take into account that the interests and needs of women and children do not always complement one another, and might in some cases directly conflict.
- Children Born of War can suffer from a lack of knowledge about their biological parents. Governments as well as national and international institutions are encouraged to put concrete measures in place to ensure the right of a Child Born of War to preserve his or her identity and, to the extent possible, to know his or her parents.
- Support measures must be developed and implemented in a way that incorporates measures to protect the identity of Children Born of War and their mothers and to ensure that they will not be endangered, discriminated or stigmatized.

- The diverse array of national and international actors that support mothers and children should cooperate closely with each other. Cooperation will allow for early identification of Children Born of War and the provision of appropriate support services.
- Given the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence and sexual violence-related pregnancies leading to Children born of War, women living in conflict and post-conflict settings should have access to safe and evidence-based comprehensive reproductive health care options.
- The systematic use of sexual violence as a strategy of war must be prosecuted as a war crime by national or international criminal tribunals.

Need for further research:

- There is a need for reliable, systematically collected data on Children Born of War. Funding for research on Children Born of War and the implementation of evidence-based support measures should be provided by national as well as international research supporting institutions.
- Internationally comparable and interdisciplinary studies are needed, which gather information on the life histories of the mothers and children as well as on the attitudes and behaviors of their families and communities.
- Trans-disciplinary research collaborations are highly recommendable for advancing policy related to Children Born of War. Funding and educational resources should target to foster such collaboration.
- There should be stronger networking among researchers and between researchers and policymakers. Research should aim to directly engage those affected and include innovative participatory research methods and dissemination. Adherence to ethical standards related to human subjects research is critical.
- Research collaboration between researchers, policy-makers and legislators is important to ensure that the rights of Children Born of War are protected, both within and outside the armed conflict context.
- There must be further research on the coping strategies of Children Born of War and long-term impacts on children's health and wellbeing. Results of this research should directly inform support measures.
- Research on the fathers of Children Born of War should be conducted to understand structural and culture-specific behavioural patterns towards the

mothers of their children, and women and children generally, in conflict-affected areas.

- Access to data and information from military and other armed groups is imperative, in order to analyze the organizational structure and culture where sexual violence forms part of military strategy. This data must be obtained in a way that protects the identity of victims and respects the integrity of relevant criminal proceedings.