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Scars of Wars on Children: Efforts Towards Healing the Hurt

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ABSTRACT: Wars often result in casualties far beyond the immediate and physical loss of life, leaving children in conflict and war zones with deep and long-lasting scars. This study examines the multidimensional impact of war on children, focusing on psychological, sociological, physiological, educational, economic, emotional, and health-related consequences. Methodologically, the study adopts a narrative review and conceptual humanitarian analysis approach, drawing on secondary evidence, statistics, reports, and documented cases from international humanitarian agencies, policy sources, scholarly literature, and credible news organizations. The findings show that war affects children through interconnected forms of harm, including trauma, fear, PTSD, displacement, family separation, loss of community support, physical injury, malnutrition, disease, school disruption, poverty, child labour risk, and reduced future opportunities. The review further highlights that these harms are not isolated; rather, they reinforce one another and create long-term threats to children's safety, development, dignity, and well-being. The study concludes with clear calls to action addressing the scars of war that requires an integrated, multi-sectoral, and sustained humanitarian response, including psychological first aid, safe spaces, educational continuity, family and community support, child-focused aid, medical assistance, protected safe zones, and innovative online humanitarian initiatives. Protecting children from the consequences of war must therefore be treated as a shared moral, humanitarian, and global responsibility.

I. INTRODUCTION

Truth is regarded as the biggest casualty of war. The next most affected entity, probably, are the women and children in the war zone. They are the voiceless majority who suffer in silence, pain, and helplessness.

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The story of war in our times has been the stories of pain of women and children. 473 million children live in conflict zones, recorded the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), an independent research institution which conducts research on the conditions for peaceful relations between states, groups and people (Buchanan, E. (2024, October 10).

These displacements have happened in conflict and conflict-like zones ranging from Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Nigeria, Syria, Lebanon, Myanmar, Palestine, and Sudan, Ukraine being a recent addition to the list, as reflected in Table 1 below.

TABLE I
COUNTRY-WISE DATA OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY RUNNING WAR OR CONFLICTS

Country/Region	Children Affected	Key Concerns
Sudan UNICEF. (n.d.)	5 million displaced	Displacement, sexual violence, famine
Gaza UNICEF USA. (2025)	13,000+ killed, 25,000 injured	Casualties, education disruption
Ukraine Associated Press. (n.d.)	2,520+ casualties	Increased child casualties
Colombia (Catatumbo) Reuters. (n.d.)	46,000 out of school	Education disruption
Ethiopia The Guardian. (n.d.)	650,000 without malnutrition treatment	Food insecurity
Lebanon UNICEF. (2025, February 28). UNICEF Lebanon.	50% of children under two are in food poverty	Nutrition crisis
Syria UN Women. (n.d.)	75% of children born during war	Lifelong exposure to conflict

Sources for the figure above on Country-wise data of children affected by running war or conflicts: UNICEF. (n.d.); UNICEF USA. (2025); Associated Press. (n.d.); Reuters. (n.d.); The Guardian. (n.d.); Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). UN Women. (n.d.).

The 2024 data released by the UN General Assembly Security Council tells a tale of alarming devastations. The highest numbers of violations were the killing (5,301) and maiming (6,348) of 11,649 children, followed by the recruitment and use of 8,655 children, 5,205 verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access and the abduction of 4,356 children. Children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups (2,491), including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons United Nations. (2024).

While the numbers are alarming, the stories behind them are even more heart wrenching. The effect of war on women and children is manifold and horizontal affecting various aspects of their life and to the scale to which they suffer. Women and children affected by armed conflicts are exposed to increased levels of traumatic experiences. While direct exposure to violence includes killing, maiming, injuries etc., indirect effects are widespread, far reaching, and far more disturbing. These include denial of humanitarian access, displacements, refugeehood, disruption of family structure, and social disintegration, food crisis, lack of education, health hazards, sexual violence, mental and a whole lot of other traumatic experiences that scare and scar children for life.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to synthesize available humanitarian, policy, and scholarly evidence on the multidimensional impact of war and armed conflict on children, with particular attention to the psychological, sociological, physiological, educational, economic, and health-related scars that continue beyond the period of active conflict. The paper further aims to move beyond documenting the scale of suffering by identifying action-oriented pathways for protection, recovery, and long-term healing. Guided by this aim, the paper addresses the following questions: First, what major forms of harm do wars and armed conflicts inflict on children across different conflict-affected contexts? Second, what humanitarian responses and recovery-oriented actions can help reduce these harms and support the healing of war-affected children?

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a structured narrative review and conceptual humanitarian analysis approach to examine the multidimensional impact of war and armed conflict on children. The study does not use primary data collection; instead, it synthesizes secondary evidence from humanitarian reports, United Nations publications, international NGO documents, policy briefs, scholarly literature, and credible news sources. Relevant sources were identified through purposive searches using keywords such as children in armed conflict, war trauma among children, child displacement, education in conflict zones, child casualties in war, mental health of war-affected children, malnutrition in conflict zones, child protection in humanitarian crises, and post-war recovery for children. Sources were included if they directly addressed the impact of war or armed conflict on children and contributed to one or more of the study's thematic areas: psychological, sociological, physiological, educational, economic, and health-related scars.

Sources were excluded if they were not child-focused, not related to conflict or war contexts, lacked relevance to the study themes, duplicated stronger evidence, or did not provide credible support. Priority was given to recent sources published between 2020 and 2025, while older scholarly and policy sources were retained where they offered foundational conceptual value. The selected evidence was reviewed, extracted, and organized thematically to identify patterns of harm and corresponding humanitarian responses.

To strengthen reliability, the study prioritized sources from UNICEF, United Nations agencies, WHO, UNHCR, Save the Children, War Child UK, UNESCO, CARE, peer-reviewed scholarship, and internationally recognized news agencies.

In this way, the methodology combines document-based evidence synthesis, thematic categorization, and action-oriented interpretation to develop a coherent humanitarian framework for understanding and responding to the scars of war on children.

III. SCARS OF WARS

This article analyzes the following scars of wars.

A. Psychological Scars

Of all the effects, the psychological scars are the deepest and long-lasting. War and conflicts afflict children the most with their psychology. Children witnessing war-induced violence are prone to a childhood of living in constant fear, denial and absence of childlike carefree innocence.

Psychological and emotional trauma is the result of extraordinarily stressful events that shatter children's sense of security, making them feel helpless in an unsettling world. It leaves them struggling with upsetting emotions, memories, and anxiety that won't easily go away, leaving them feeling numb, disconnected, and unable to trust other people (HelpGuide. (n.d.)

When studied psychologically, such effects are often grouped as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A key report by WHO on PTSD documents that while an estimated 3.9% of the world population has had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at some stage in their lives, the rates of PTSD are more than three times (15.3%) higher among people exposed to violent conflict or war World Health Organization. (2023, June 15).

Symptoms of psychological and physical trauma manifest in many facets as illustrated in Figure 1 below:

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Fig. 1 Wheel of Trauma: Emotional/Psychological and Physical

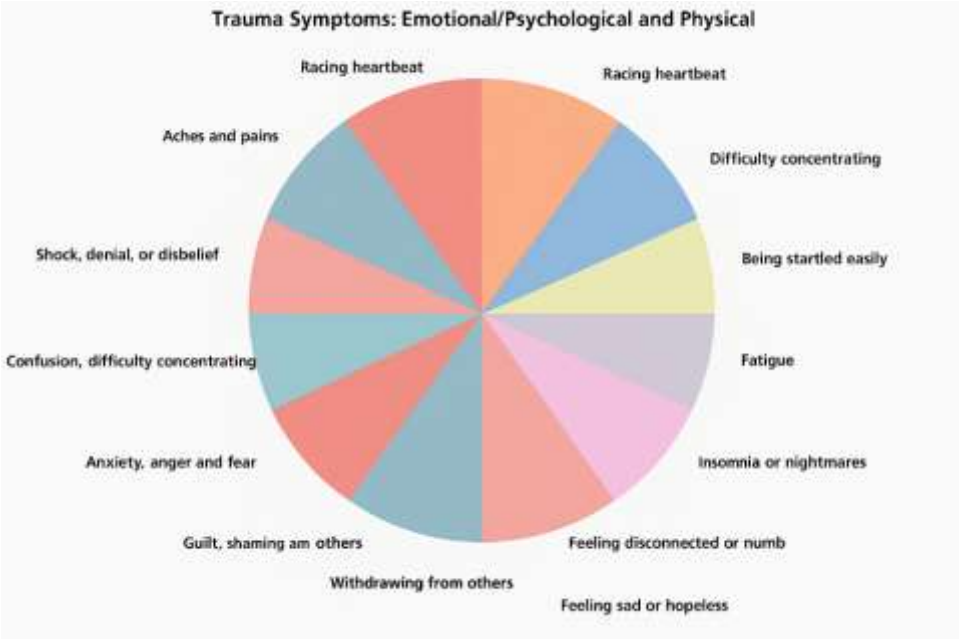


Image ideation: Author; Image generation: AI

(Source: Wheel of Trauma above (Smith, M., Robinson, L., & Segal, J. (n.d.)

An organization named War Child, in their first study of psychological impact of war on vulnerable children in Gaza, shares startling facts. This survey with the caregivers reveals that 73% of the children (92% boys vs. 54% girls) exhibited aggressive behavior, while 79% suffered from nightmares. Additionally, 87% of children experienced severe fear, and 38% reported bed-wetting. Pessimism was prevalent, with 90% of children expressing a bleak outlook due to war. Introversion affected 70% of girls and 55% of the children overall, and nearly half of the caregivers (49%) reported that their children believed they would die in the war. When asked specifically about the views of the boys in their care, this figure rose to 72%. Furthermore, 77% of children expressed feelings of sadness, and an overwhelming 96% felt that death was imminent (War Child UK. (2024.

While this is one story, the tales from other conflict zones are filled with similar concerns. Psychological dents are often silent but may be the most harmful among all types of effects of war. Such effects hence call for early interventions to be supported by comprehensive and protective measures that are all encompassing and cover the different facets of the tragedy, like:

- Psychological First Aid: Immediate support to help children cope with trauma.
- Safe Spaces: Establishing child-friendly environments where children can feel secure and receive support (Beals, M, 2024, April 30; War Child UK. (2024).
- Educational Continuity: Ensuring access to education to provide structure and a sense of normalcy (Beals, M, 2024, April 30; War Child UK. (2024).
- Community and Family Support: Engaging caregivers and communities in the healing process (Beals, M, 2024, April 30; War Child UK. (2024).

B. Sociological Scars

Sociological scars are recorded as another traumatic effect of war. The sociological repercussions of conflicts such as anxiety, loneliness and insecurity have been reported as the defining symptoms of conflicts and war on children. Loss of homes, friends, family and folks, displacements etc. are the immediate consequences.

The prolonged exposure to war and uncertainty means that many children are in a state of 'toxic stress'. Children in Syria, Haiti, Yemen, Gaza, Ukraine and many other war-torn countries share the same experiences of loss, destruction and could have

lifelong implications on their physical and psychological wellbeing Save the Children. (2024, March 7). An evolved understanding of lifelong implications on children's physical and psychological wellbeing follows.

The ongoing crisis in Sudan is a case study in sociological scars inflicted on the children. The running civil war in Sudan has led to the displacement of approximately 13 million people. Of this, children have faced maximum brunt as an estimated five million children have already been forced to fled their homes so far, often losing parental care and traditional community networks, while another almost 14 million minors are desperately in need of humanitarian assistance.

The Guardian, in its article "Children of war: six orphans' 1,000-mile journey across Sudan in search of safety", laments the pain of Haroun and his young siblings who set out in search of safe havens.

"After dysentery killed their mother and the civil war came to their home in Omdurman, Haroun and his young siblings were forced to set off on an epic quest to reach El Geneina.

They were huddled together on the bare floor of an abandoned house – four orphans who had travelled nearly 1,000 miles after having to flee from their home in the city when Sudan's brutal civil war erupted.

Having escaped ferocious fighting around Omdurman, twin city of the capital, Khartoum, they had arrived in Darfur, the sprawling region in western Sudan that has become synonymous with ethnic cleansing, massacres of civilians and widespread gang-rape and sexual violence during the ongoing conflict between Sudan's armed forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

"But we couldn't stay, it was too deadly," says Asrar, 13, sitting beside three of her siblings, twins Mustafa and Mujtaba, nine, and seven-year-old Fatima.

The six are symbolic of a conflict that has ravaged swaths of Africa's third-largest country is how the article documents the pain of the subject of their study (Mark, M. (2025, April 11).

Loss of family, folks and a structured community result in devastating consequences in terms of immediate safety and security and a long-term potential threat of trafficking and crime. Desperate measures are called in to address both the running challenges and potential threats. With the organizations and people working on this aspect, the two core strategies have emerged towards attending this concern: Family Reunification Programs- a structured system to trace, identify and reunite separated children with their families, and Community Engagement- running specific programs to strengthen community initiatives to extend a sense of belonging and support children separated from their families and immediate social system.

C. Physiological Scars

Physical loss and hurt to their bodies and life are the immediate manifestation to children in war and conflicts. Wounds, amputations, organ damage, malnutrition effects, chronic pain, respiratory problems and many such health hazards are the end results of prolonged conflicts across continents. Statistics from Ukraine on this count are representative of all such conflict zones.

1) Key Statistics on Child Casualties:

- Over 2,520 children have been killed or injured since the escalation of the war, according to UN-verified data. The actual numbers are likely higher due to underreporting in conflict zones (UNICEF 2024, February 20).
- In 2024, there was a 50% increase in child casualties compared to the previous year, highlighting the intensifying dangers faced by children (UNICEF 2024, February 20).
- An average of 16 children is killed or injured every week in Ukraine, underscoring the persistent threat to young lives (UNICEF 2023, February 17).

Detailed data from the conflict zones are presented below in Figure 2.

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Fig. 2 Death, Injuries, and Amputations of Children in War and Conflict Zones (2025)



Image ideation: Author; Image generation: AI

Sources for the figure above on Children in Conflict: Al Jazeera. (2025); Save the Children. (2024); UNICEF. (2025, May 27); UNICEF. (2024, February 20); UNICEF. (2023, February 17); Watchlist. (2024); Associated Press. (2024); UNICEF USA. (2023); United Nations. (2024).

Devastation calls for specific and targeted actions leading to protective measures and support. While notable organizations in this zone like UNICEF and Save the Children are actively working, there are expectations of working in a more enhanced and structured way on these two clearly identified areas below:

- Provide medical aid: an immediate action to deal with injuries is to deliver essential healthcare services to injured children (UNICEF. (2024, December).
- Establish safe zones: to minimize injury and hurt to children, make efforts to create child-friendly spaces away from conflict areas (Save the Children. (n.d.).

D. Educational Scars

The most far-reaching effect of war and conflict on children has been the attack on their education, both current and prospective. War attacks a young person's future, potential life options, and employment opportunities. In times of conflict and crisis, classrooms have become battlefields, depriving millions of children around the world of their right to learn, play, and grow (Moving Minds Alliance. (n.d.). Evidence highlights that the longer children from war zones are out of school, the less likely they are to ever go back to schools, and the more they are at risk of exploitation, abuse, crime.

Almost half of the world's refugee children currently receive no schooling. In host countries, displaced children may face language barriers, legal or administrative obstacles, discrimination and social marginalization (War Victims Fund. (n.d.).

The impact on education is reported both in terms of loss of educational infrastructure and opportunities. The extent of the damage to educational facilities is mammoth, which is evident in a UNICEF report which estimates that over 52 million children in conflict-affected countries are currently out of school, marking it one of the worst education crises in recent history (UNICEF. (2024, December 29).

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Data in Figures 3 and 4 below lament the scale of effects on educational structures and the school going children.

Fig. 3 Destruction of Educational Structures in Conflict Zones (2025)

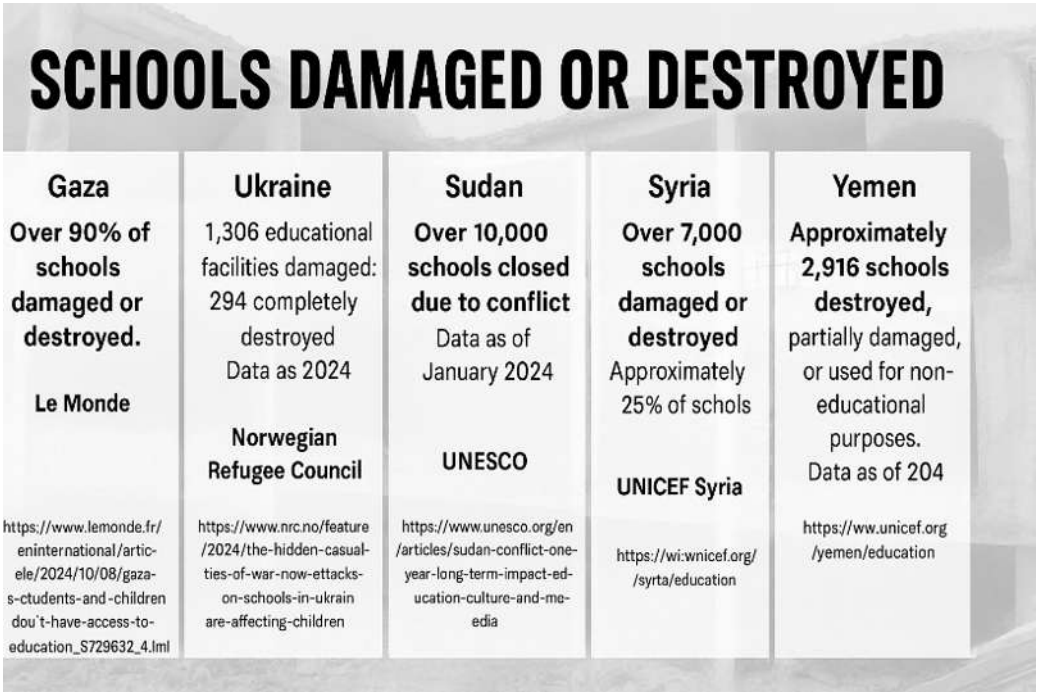


Image ideation: Author; Image generation: AI. Sources for the figure above on Schools damaged or destroyed in the figure above: Le Monde. (2024, October 8); Norwegian Refugee Council. (2024); UNESCO. (2024, January); UNICEF. (n.d.); UNICEF. (n.d.).

Fig. 4 Children Out of School in Conflict Zones (2025)

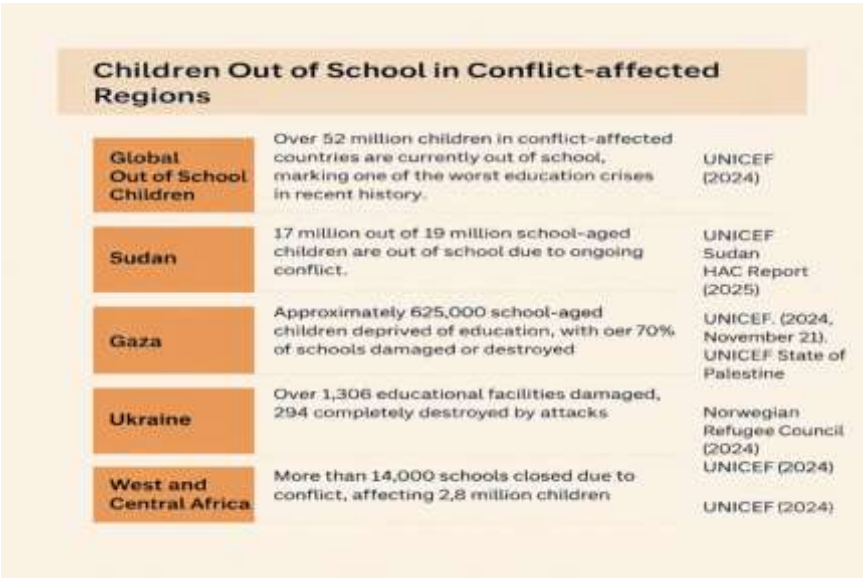


Image ideation: Author; Image generation: AI

Sources for the figure above on Children Out of Schools in Conflict-affected Regions: UNICEF. (2024, December 29); UNICEF. (2025); UNICEF. (2024, November 21). UNICEF State of Palestine; Norwegian Refugee Council. (2024); UNICEF. (2024); UNICEF. (2024, March 27).

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The data are depressing, and the consequences of educational disruptions are far beyond the loss of learning, threatening children's very civic life. Clearly identified repercussions of absence of educational structures in the immediate context include psychological impact like worsening trauma that impedes emotional development. Children out of school are also more vulnerable to exploitation and susceptible to soft crimes and fall into the trap of organized crimes jeopardizing peacebuilding efforts. While in the longer term, this could pose challenges to future economic stability.

Given the enormity and long-term effects of the loss of the educational support system, it requires intensive efforts to mitigate the crisis. Organizations operating in conflict zones like UNICEF and Save the Children are already doing their bit. UNICEF is working with an initiative called the "School-in-a-Box" which aims at providing educational resources needed in the immediate context, in emergency settings (UNICEF Australia. (2024, December 18). The portfolio of Save the Children included establishing temporary learning spaces and supporting teacher training in conflict zones to maintain continuity in the challenging situation. But given the scale of this pressing humanitarian issue, it calls for more though, sustained efforts both in terms of scale and initiatives.

E. Economic Scars

While the human cost of war and conflict is not a match to other types of losses, these are often intertwined closely with the economic costs. $49.7 billion annually is the estimated cost of homicides of children in conflict-affected countries globally. This huge economic results from the cost of treating victims; productivity losses in the short and long run as a result of death or disability; and reduced human capital accumulation (Overseas Development Institute. (2022).

On the individual front, in the long term, a critical economic impact includes Reduced Lifetime Earning Potential: children missing out on formal schooling or receiving lower-quality education due to conflict, get their future job prospects and income-earning capacity severely diminished (World Bank. (2011). Increased Risk of Child Labor is another depressing concern: Families facing economic hardship in war zones often rely on children to contribute income. Early entry into the labor force instead of attending school can perpetuate generational poverty (UNICEF. (n.d.). Cycles of Displacement and Poverty is another perpetual outcome of the loss of education. Frequent relocation, especially to refugee camps, keeps families and kids in a constant state of flux and uncertainty. Because of this, families cannot establish stable living and livelihoods. This instability pushes children into temporary or informal work instead of continuing schooling, perpetuating cycles of poverty (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (n.d.).

Figure 5 below presents a comparison between the cumulative economic cost of war and the impact on children, in particular.

Fig. 5 Economic Costs and Impact on Children in Conflict Zones (2025)

ECONOMIC IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Country / Region	Economic Impact	Impact on Children
Sudan *UNICEF. (2025). Number of children in need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan doubles as conflict enters third year amid 'perfect storm' of threats to children. UNICEF Sudan.*	Estimated $49 billion in losses; economy shrank 40% in 2023, with another 28% decline forecast in 2024.	Over 12.3 million displaced; children face education disruption, malnutrition, and lack of basic services.
Gaza (Palestine) *UNICEF. (2025, August 22). Famine confirmed for first time in Gaza. UNICEF.*	Food prices up 1,400%; humanitarian aid blockaded. Data as of 2024.	65,000+ children suffer acute malnutrition; 1.1 million face food insecurity.
Ukraine *UNICEF: War in Ukraine pushes a generation of children to the brink.*	Infrastructure collapse and livelihood loss; economic crisis deepening.	Child poverty doubled from 43% to 82%; access to healthcare, housing, and schooling disrupted.
Lebanon *Reuters: U.S. aid cuts force UNICEF to reduce Lebanon nutrition programmes.*	U.S. aid cuts and economic collapse; soaring inflation.	50% of children under 2 in Bekaa / Baalbek face severe food poverty. Access to healthcare, nutrition, and education is increasingly disrupted.

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Image ideation: Author; Image generation: AI

Sources for the figure above on Economic Impact on Children: UNICEF. (2025); UNICEF. (2025, August 22); UNICEF. (2023, October 9); Reuters. (2025, February 28).

The economic cost of conflict on children is too costly to ignore. Immediate and strategic initiatives are called for to contain the emerging crisis. A concerted effort is required towards the following: Scale up children-focused humanitarian aid to conflict zones; and Rebuild education infrastructure and support remote learning. Remote learning educational support could be an alternative to children who are either displaced or are out of school due to damaged educational facilities; and establishing targeted cash support programs for families would attend to child poverty.

F. Health Scars

Three years into the conflict, Ukraine has seen a tripling in the number of children seeking mental health support. Over 50,000 children sought professional help in the first nine months of 2024 alone, with many exhibiting signs of chronic stress, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Reuters. (2025, February 20).

Change Ukraine to Gaza, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen or any other conflict zone and the story of pain and helplessness remains the same. The far-reaching concerns arising out of conflicts on the health and mortality of children are noted as far exceeding the effects on those directly affected by violence in conflicts. Malnutrition, physical injuries, acute and infectious diseases, sexual and reproductive health issues, and poor mental health are all results of extended exposure to conflict (El-Khatib, Z., Scales, D., Vearey, J., & Forsberg, B. C. (2020).

A review of data on the health of children in war and conflict zones reports a multitude of health challenges. The five critical one identified are – malnutrition, physical injuries, acute/infectious diseases, sexual & reproductive health, and mental health. Table 2 below presents data on these counts. Collected from multiple sources these data amply illustrate the severity of impacts on conflict-affected children.

TABLE II
HEALTH ISSUES AND IMPACT ON CONFLICT-AFFECTED CHILDREN (2025)

Health Issue	**Impact**
Malnutrition unicef.org, rescue.org	Widespread acute child hunger and stunting: Protracted conflicts drive high rates of child malnutrition. For example, in Yemen nearly 2.7 million children are acutely malnourished, and 49% of under-fives suffer chronic malnutrition (stunting). In Sudan's ongoing war, about 4 million children under 5 are acutely malnourished, and over 700,000 severely malnourished children risk death from starvation without treatment. These levels of malnutrition impair immunity and development, contributing to almost half of under-five deaths in conflict areas.
Physical Injuries unicef.org	High child casualty rates from violence: Children are extremely vulnerable to injury and death in conflicts. Tens of thousands are killed or maimed annually. In 2023, the UN verified 32,990 grave violations (including killings and maimings) against children – the highest on record. The war in Gaza alone (late 2023–early 2025) has reportedly killed over 15,000 children and injured 34,000 more, an unprecedented toll. In Yemen, similarly, over 11,000 children have been killed or injured since 2015. Explosive weapons, gunfire, and landmines are leading causes of these physical injuries.
Acute & Infectious Diseases unicef.org, savethechildren.net, care.org.au	Disease outbreaks due to collapsed health services: Conflict greatly increases the risk of infectious disease among children. War damages water, sanitation, and healthcare infrastructure, causing vaccination rates to plummet. Sudan's conflict cut childhood immunization coverage from ~85% pre-war to ~50% (only ~30% in active conflict zones), leaving an estimated 3.4 million children under 5 highly vulnerable to

	measles, cholera, pneumonia, and other epidemics. In 2024, cholera outbreaks in conflict-affected regions led to nearly 500,000 cases and a 126% increase in cholera deaths. Polio re-emerged in Gaza in 2024 after 25 years due to shattered health systems.
Sexual & Reproductive Health unicefusa.org, unicef.org, care.org.au	Heightened sexual violence and maternal risks: Armed conflicts expose children to sexual violence and exploitation and erode maternal and reproductive healthcare. In 2023, conflict-torn Haiti saw a tenfold increase in reported cases of sexual violence against children amid rampant gang warfare. During Sudan's 2024 conflict, at least 221 children (66% girls, many boys and infants) were raped by armed men, with actual cases likely far higher due to underreporting. Such attacks bring risk of trauma, HIV, and unwanted pregnancies. Conflict also devastates maternal health services – one in two women who die from pregnancy or childbirth globally is in a conflict-affected country. Maternal mortality in war settings is up to 40 times higher than in peaceful settings. In Gaza, pregnant women have been 3× more likely to die in childbirth during fighting.
Poor Mental Health progressive.org, unicef.org	Trauma and psychosocial distress: Mental health issues are pervasive among conflict-affected children, stemming from violence, displacement, and loss. Studies estimate roughly 22% of children exposed to armed conflict develop acute mental disorders (e.g. PTSD, anxiety, depression) – far above typical rates. In Gaza, about 4 in 5 children show extreme trauma (e.g. nightmares, anxiety, mutism, pain). Many (96%) fear they will die; nearly half have said they don't want to live. Even after conflict, emotional scars persist – in Lebanon (2024), 72% of caregivers said children were anxious, and 62% said they were depressed.

Image ideation: Author; Image generation: AI

Sources for Table II above on Health Issues and Impact on Conflict-Affected Children: UNICEF. (2023, March 27); International Rescue Committee. (2024); UNICEF. (2023, June 28); UNICEF. (2023, March 27); UNICEF. (2024); Save the Children. (2024, December 18); CARE Australia. (2024); UNICEF USA. (2025); UNICEF MENA. (2024); CARE Australia. (2024); Tuhus, M. (2025, February 25); UNICEF. (2024, February 5).

The data above highlights current conditions, but the escalating conflicts and humanitarian crises are increasingly worsening the situation. Also, these issues are deeply interrelated and compound one another, undermining an entire generation's well-being.

IV. Discussion

The impact of war on children, thus, cannot be understood through a single category of harm. Psychological, sociological, physiological, educational, economic, and health-related scars are deeply interconnected and often reinforce one another. The findings of the study make note of the following overlapping, overwhelming and the cumulative impact of these scars.

The psychological impact of war is closely connected with other forms of harm. Fear, nightmares, aggression, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress are not only emotional responses; they are also shaped by physical injury, displacement, family separation, hunger, and disrupted education. The psychological scars may become more severe when children remain outside stable family, school, and community environments.

Similarly, sociological scars are linked to the collapse of social protection around children. When war destroys homes, separates families, and displaces communities, children lose the social systems that normally protect them. These social disruptions increase children's exposure to exploitation, trafficking, violence, and long-term insecurity. Therefore, child protection cannot be limited to emergency rescue; it must include family reunification, community support, safe environments, and continuity of care.

The educational consequences of war are also wider than the loss of schooling. School is not only a place of academic learning; it also provides routine, social interaction, protection, emotional stability, and hope for the future. When education is interrupted, children become more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, crime, and long-term poverty. This establishes that educational continuity should be treated as a central humanitarian priority, not as a secondary need after food, shelter, and medical aid.

The health and physiological effects of war further demonstrate the need for an integrated response. Physical injuries, amputations, malnutrition, infectious diseases, poor mental health, and reproductive health risks are not separate crises; they often occur together in a devastating humanitarian eco-system. Such physiological conditions are worsened when healthcare facilities are damaged, humanitarian access is denied, sanitation systems collapse, and children are displaced from safe living environments. The economic scars of war also extend lifelong and often across generations. The loss of education, family income, stable housing, and health support reduces children's future earning potential and increases the risk of child labour and long-term poverty. Therefore, economic recovery for war-affected children must include education rebuilding, family support, and long-term social reintegration.

Together, these findings suggest that fragmented humanitarian responses are insufficient. That child protection in conflict zones must be integrated, multi-sectoral, and sustained. Hence, the humanitarian protection framework ought to combine emergency protection with long-term healing, education, healthcare, psychosocial support, family and community rebuilding, and economic recovery.

V. CATASTROPHE AND CALLS TO ACTION

The crisis is massive and calls for multi-pronged actions. Hence, the humanitarian protection framework ought to combine

emergency protection with long-term healing. This includes both continuing and strengthening the current initiatives

and coming up with other innovative options. Below are some action points to this end.

- Psychological First Aid: Immediate support to help children cope with trauma. Being implemented in some measures but needs to be scaled up. Since some conflict zones may lack appropriate physical and other resources to provide such support, sometimes because of the scale of the demand, starting Online Psychological First Aid mechanisms could be a great help.
- Safe Spaces: Establishing child-friendly environments where children can feel secure and receive support.
- Educational Continuity: Ensuring access to education to provide structure and a sense of normalcy. Since the crisis is global, support ought to be global too. Again, online school and educational support could be a game-changer to attend to this crucial action. Online Global Humanitarian Schools can be operated from anywhere in the world with minimal technical support like the availability of internet connections on the ground. War affected children could join this individually or at common space like a camp etc. Attending school-like institutions will help children build social ties besides getting an education.
- Community and Family Support: Engaging caregivers and communities in the healing process. Wider support is always welcome. Online support from across the world can be provided. These could range from psychological, emotional, games and fun opportunities, all helping in taking the children away from their daily trauma.
- Children-focused humanitarian aid to conflict zones: Aid is never enough for a clearly established tragedy of this big scale yet these all help. Scaling up children-focused humanitarian aid to conflict zones is a need of the hour. Governments, non-governmental organizations, philanthropists, volunteers, civil societies all need to pool in together. Collected funds could be used to strengthen targeted cash support programs to attend to child poverty as a direct action. Also, such funds could aid efforts in rebuilding education infrastructure and support remote online learning as its second line of utilization.
- Medical aid: an immediate action to deal with injuries is to deliver essential healthcare services to injured children.These are already being taken yet there is need to strengthen them and expand the support. A global medical support mission on the pattern of Online Global Humanitarian Schools. Online medical consultation is a reality in many developed countries across the world. Online technology can be leveraged in this crisis too. Online Global Humanitarian Clinics could help in pulling

in medical professionals and volunteers to extend online medical support in the conflict zones. Again, this initiative requires some basic internet services support on the ground.

- Establish safe zones: to minimize injury and hurt to children, make efforts to create child-friendly spaces away from conflict areas. Again, this initiative is in practice but needs to be formalized and expanded. Warring parties should be talked to and made to agree on identifying and declaring some areas in the conflict zones as Safe zones. Such zones to house children, away from the target of fighting.
- UNICEF run "School-in-a-Box" is a fantastic initiative providing educational resources needed in the immediate context, in emergency settings. Such bubbles could be increased in numbers with volunteer support. These could also work as a feeder to the online humanitarian schools. These may be focused on ensuring minimal internet connectivity related resources to the children so that they can attend online schools from their safe zones.
- Save the Children's temporary learning spaces and supporting teacher training in conflict zones is critical to maintain continuity in the challenging situation. But given the scale of this pressing humanitarian issue, it calls for more though, sustained efforts both in terms of scale and initiatives.
- Interlinking initiatives: Some of the initiatives already undertaken are working wonders as stand alone, yet they have the potential to bring added value if they work together. Initiatives like Establishing Safe Spaces, Online Global Humanitarian Clinics, UNICEF's "School-in-a-Box", Global Humanitarian Schools, and Community and Family Support initiatives all have the natural potential to double as feeder to each other. All these initiatives essentially require the common resource of internet connectivity. Pulling in common resources could benefit all these initiatives on scale, reach and impact.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the effect of the catastrophe of conflicts and wars are all pervasive. The numbers are numbing, and data are devastating. These war data are colder than they appear. Their effects linger on much after the conflicts have subsided and wars are closed.

Wars may start and end, but the wounds of wars remain open for life. These wounds need to be healed. It necessitates work on a collective call to action. One that starts with and is defined by compassion, care, and seeped in human values of ensuring a dignified life for all children. World leaders to world media to all those in a position to help must rise to the occasion. For who wins if the children lose!

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI

AI tool (ChatGPT 5.5) has been used in this study. The usage has been restricted to assisting in creating tables, graphs etc., and in some cases, for language refinement.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare no competing interests.

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