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**Information on the impact of environmental degradation, pollution or childhood exposure to hazardous substances on children’s rights, including the right to health.**

With climate change and environmental degradation, including desertification, rising sea levels and land degradation, the risk of conflict and violence can increase, thus threatening children’s physical and mental health as well as their psychosocial wellbeing throughout their life and stunting their development as adults.

Children in situations of armed conflict are exposed to extreme violence and can be killed or maimed, as a direct result of fighting from knife wounds, bullets and bombs. In several situations of conflict, children are being affected by hazardous substances such as those contained in explosives, landmines, ERW or IEDs, as well as in some extreme cases chemical weapons.

Many of today's armed conflicts take place in the world's poorest countries, which are at much higher risk of environmental degradation, desertification and pollution. Children in those countries are already vulnerable to malnutrition and disease. The disruption of food supplies, the destruction of crops and agricultural infrastructures, the disintegration of families and communities, the displacement of populations, the interruption of health services, including vaccination programmes, and of water and sanitation systems, all take a heavy toll on children and their right to health. Many die as a result of lack of food, causing malnutrition, while the immune system of other children becomes unable to resist childhood diseases and infections. Health facilities and health workers are increasingly targeted in situations of armed conflict, thus compounding the challenge of treating children in need by limiting both access and quality of available care. Children with disabilities, unaccompanied children and children associated with armed forces and groups are disproportionately affected.

Armed conflict can also have a devastating impact on children’s learning, as well as behavioral, emotional, and social development. If not properly addressed, the psychosocial distress resulting from witnessing or experiencing traumatic events can lead to extremely negative and long-term consequences. Children can develop aggressive or withdrawn behavior, self-harm, depression, substance abuse and, at worst, commit suicide.

The effects of armed conflict on children’s health can continue long after hostilities have ended and can have serious repercussions on their development. Unexploded ordnances, such as landmines and cluster bombs, and the destruction of health systems and social infrastructures may threaten children’s health and their access to basic necessities, such as food, health care, and education, for decades.