



**CHILDREN & YOUTH**  
**Perpetuating Violence Or**  
**Our Hope For Peace**

By Michael McGill

# Young People & Armed Conflict



- Far too many of our world's 2.2 billion children grow up amidst great violence and poverty.
- Nearly 90% of all children live in majority world (developing) nations.
- Nearly 80% of the poorest nations have experienced a major civil war in the recent past; some have over half of their population under 18 years old.

# Young People & Armed Conflict



- Youth Bulge theory shows compelling historical and contemporary evidence that countries with much of their population between 15 and 29 years old have a much higher risk of terrorism, war, and other violence.
- Children in these contexts suffer incredibly from sexual exploitation, disease, loss of education, loss of families and futures, and they represent half of war casualties.

# Median Age

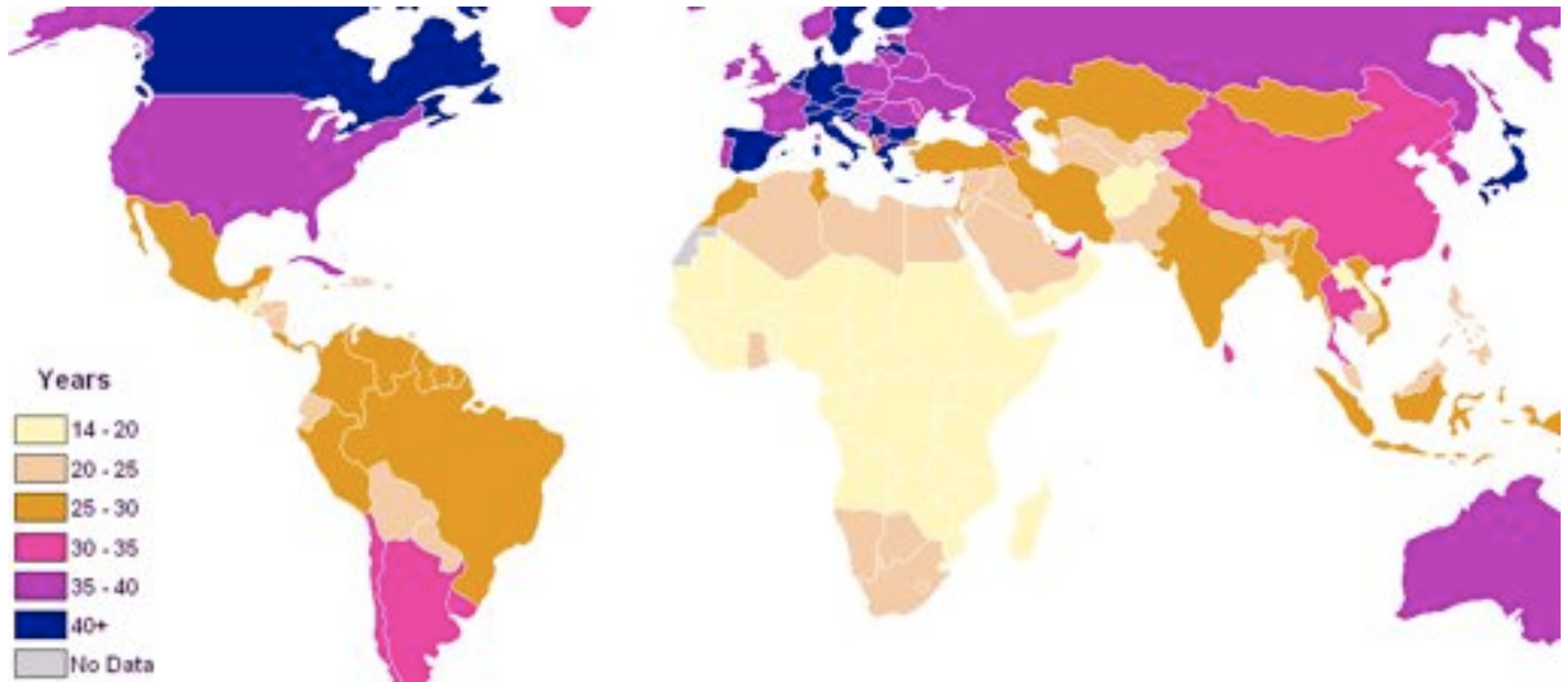


Image source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth\\_Bulge#Youth\\_bulge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_Bulge#Youth_bulge)

Copyright (c) 2011, Michael McGill. justchildren.org

# Youth Bulge Theory

Gunnar Heinsohn



# Youth Bulge Theory

Gunnar Heinsohn's version...

- *“Peace activists promise that the victory over hunger will also bring victory over war. Youth bulge analysis, however, shows again and again that when hunger ends, the killing starts in earnest. Why? Because humanitarian measures have made millions of sons stronger and better educated. For bread, people beg; for positions in society, they fight.”*
- *“From Morocco to Indonesia, the rage that we often find in young men is increased by their demographic surplus, by economic under-employment, and by sexual frustration.”*

(Heinsohn 2005, 7).

FEBRUARY 2, 2011  
**Newsweek**

# Rage Goes Viral

From Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen, a youthquake is rocking the Arab world. Get ready for the aftershocks.

Will Business Buy What Obama's Selling?

The Dirty Secret of Apple's Design

America's Happiest Unconventional Family



# An Increasingly Interconnected World

The following is an oversimplification of complex dynamics, but such global interconnections are real.

- Uprisings in Middle East can have significant links to higher food prices in Anywhere, USA when we live in a corn centered food system that relies heavily on fossil fuels for production.<sup>1</sup>
- Subsidies help keep US corn prices so low that farmers in the majority world struggle to compete, thus, helping nurture the poverty that that makes it a challenge to building systems that support stable democracies.<sup>2</sup>
- *“Established democracies fought no wars against one another during the entire twentieth century. And they generally devote lower shares of their national products to military expenditures, which decreases threats to other countries.”*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pollan, Michael. 2007. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals.*: Penguin. <sup>2</sup> Brainard, Lael., and Derek H. Chollet. 2007. *Too Poor for Peace?: Global Poverty, Conflict, and Security in the 21st Century.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. <sup>3</sup> Stassen, Glen. 1997. *New Paradigm: Just Peacemaking Theory.* Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin Spring

Copyright (c) 2011, Michael McGill. justchildren.org

FEBRUARY 7, 2011

# Newsweek

## Rage Goes Viral

From Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen, a youthquake is rocking the Arab world. Get ready for the aftershocks.

- Will Business Buy What Obama's Selling?
- The Dirty Secret of Apple's Design
- America's Happiest Unconventional Family



# Newsweek

FEBRUARY 7, 2011

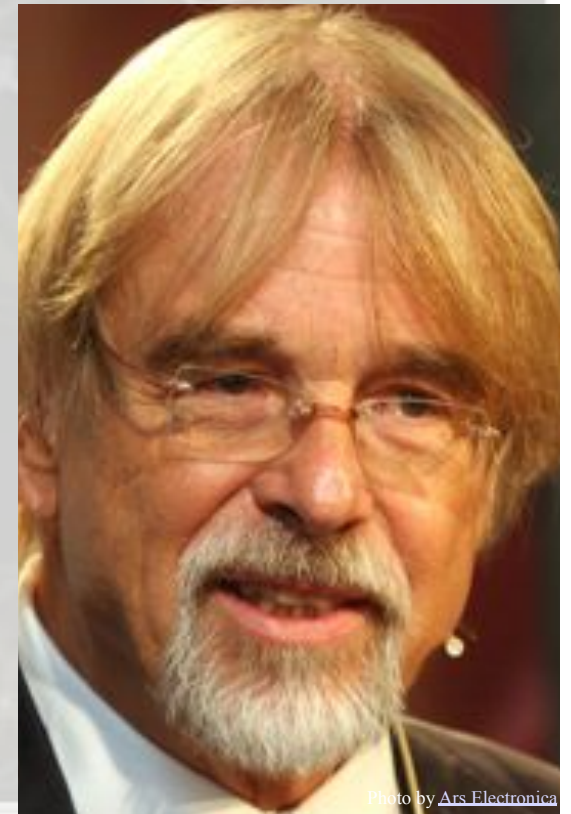
## Rage Goes Viral

From Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen, a youthquake is rocking the Arab world. Get ready for the aftershocks.

Will Business Buy What Obama's Selling?

The Dirty Secret of Apple's Design

America's Happiest Unconventional Family



Is Gunnar's deterministic prediction the only possible future?



Photo by [Chris Devers](#) of Banksy

Copyright (c) 2011, Michael McGill, [justchildren.org](http://justchildren.org)



Others believe differently.

Watch UNICEF's video on youth as the hope for a better future.

<http://youtu.be/g8-CUXXVUdI>



# What is child peacebuilding?



**Bhutanese Refugee Children's Forum** – Bhutan: A network of children's organizations working in IDP camps became known as the Bhutanese Refugee Children's Forum. Children elected peers “at different geographical levels ('ward', 'sector' and so on) and it was their duty to air the concerns and aspirations of their constituents at regular meetings of their camp's BRCF” (Hart et al. 2004, 19).

# What is child peacebuilding?



**Children Providing Aid** –Sri Lanka: Separated children in a conflict affected area of Sri Lanka identified the problem of child malnutrition and chose to weekly collect food from their own household supply and together decided to give it to children in greatest need (Hart et al. 2004, 18). By helping meet the basic needs of children in their community, these children decreased other children’s vulnerability to military recruitment for survival.

# What is child peacebuilding?



**Street Theatre & Protests – Israel/Palestine:** “various activities of Israeli and Palestinian youth involved in protesting occupation through demonstrations and street theatre (Svirsky 2001)” (McEvoy-Levy 2006, 19).

# Nurture Young Peacebuilders



*“In direct contrast with the dominant view, the evidence from the cases of Mozambique, the DRC, and Kosovo supports an argument, similar to Siobhán McEvoy-Levy’s, that the role of the youth demographic is more accurately a dependent variable: youth’s impact, whether positive or negative, is not predetermined but is guided by how well youth needs are met.”*

Quote by Schwartz, Stephanie. 2010. *Youth and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Agents of Change.*: United States Institute of Peace Press. Pg 163.

Copyright (c) 2011, Michael McGill. [justchildren.org](http://justchildren.org) Photo by UNICEF 2006

# Nurture Young Peacebuilders



1. Provide humanitarian aid
2. Reintegrate
3. Facilitate youth empowerment in the nation's political, social, and economic structures

Stephanie Schwartz

# Nurture Young Peacebuilders

How do we do this?

My research included an extensive review of child peacebuilding literature, and original interviews and focus groups conducted with children and adults throughout Colombia. Significant findings resulted not only from responses to each question, but also from interactions between questions, and interactions with related literature.

## Some Of My Research Questions:

What motivates youth to build peace?

## Some Of My Research Questions:

What motivates youth to build peace?

What prevents youth peace-building?



## Some Of My Research Questions:

What motivates youth to build peace?

What prevents youth peace-building?

What things help make youth peace-building more possible?

## Some Of My Research Questions:

What motivates youth to build peace?

What prevents youth peace-building?

What things help make youth peace-building more possible?

What things should children not do in an attempt to build peace?

## Some Of My Research Questions:

What motivates youth to build peace?

What prevents youth peace-building?

What things help make youth peace-building more possible?

What things should children not do in an attempt to build peace?

What prevents some youth/child organizations from developing opportunities for youth to engage in peace-building efforts?

# Nurture Young Peacebuilders



# **Nurture Young Peacebuilders**

My research revealed that a major detriment to more child peacebuilding action was the lack of a moral framework for child peacebuilding.

# A Moral Framework For Child Participation in Peacebuilding





# Developing Capacity & Responsibility

## PHYSICAL CAPACITY & RESPONSIBILITY

What is the child's physical capacity?

How is the child physically limited?

What is the child's strength, endurance, need for sleep and food?

# Developing Capacity & Responsibility

## PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPACITY & RESPONSIBILITY

### Cognitive capacity

- What level of complexity or simplicity of peacebuilding ideas is the child ready to learn?
- What is his/her ability to consider the past and the future, and plan future events?
- What type of ideas, and with what methods, does s/he have the ability to teach other children and/or adults?
- What training would the child need to be able to equip others?
- With what depth can the child consider another's perspective?

# Developing Capacity & Responsibility

## PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPACITY & RESPONSIBILITY

### Psychological Processes

- What is the child's capacity for understanding emotions?
- What is the child's capacity for understanding psychological processes such as forgiveness, grief, grace, and repentance?
- How developed is the child's faith and in what ways?
- How do they draw strength, security, confidence, conviction, and/or guidance from their faith?
- What is the child's ability to evaluate their choice options, the potential consequences of each, and choose with delayed gratification?
- What is the child's depth of relational competence?



# Freedom to Participate

## PHYSICAL FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE

### Destructive

- Why might the child feel manipulated or coerced to participate in this peacebuilding project?
- Is there anything that may make the child feel they will lose relationship, resources, safety, or something else, if they do not speak or act in a certain way?

# Freedom to Participate

## PHYSICAL FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE

### Constructive

- How is the child being given the physical freedom to build peace?
- Do they have transportation to peacebuilding activities?
- Are the child's basic physical needs cared for?
- Does the child have peacebuilding opportunities that match his/her physical capacity?
- Does the child have peacebuilding opportunities that connect with his/her faith community?
- Are there clear places for the child to be heard, and have his/her ideas valued and responded to?
- Are child peacebuilding opportunities available within civic structures that nurture the value of children's citizenship?

# Freedom to Participate

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE

### Destructive

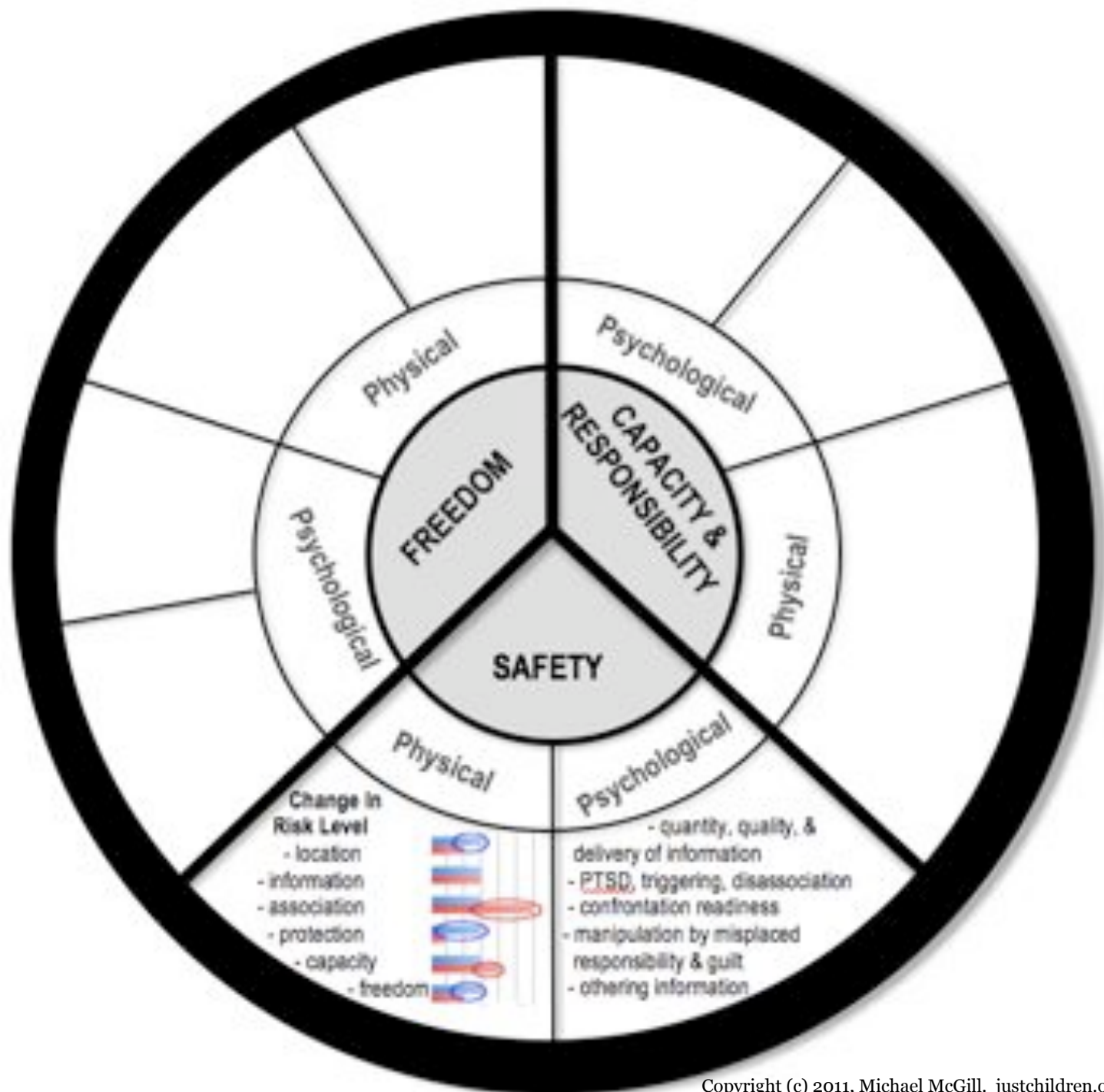
- Is there information being withheld from the child in order to achieve another's ambitions?
- How might the child be deceived about his/her peacebuilding role, his/her power or voice in a project, the impact of his/her activity, the true aims of the project, or about other issues?
- What voices or forces in a child's life may be discouraging him/her from peacebuilding or communicating s/he is incapable of building peace?

# Freedom to Participate

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE

### Constructive

- How might we encourage the child?
- Is the child offered a developmentally appropriate understanding of how her faith connects with conflict and peacebuilding, and his/her role in the two?
- How might a child's faith community nurture his/her spiritual development in a way that increases his/her peacebuilding capacity and freedom.
- How might adults let the child know s/he is a valuable peacebuilder?
- Does the amount and type of conflict and peacebuilding information given to a child match the child's cognitive and psychological development?
- Does the peacebuilding education delivery method surpass the child's cognitive and/or psychological development?



# Safety

## PHYSICAL SAFETY

*What level of increased physical risk may occur in any of the following areas because of the child's peacebuilding involvement:*

Location: To what degree may the location of the peacebuilding activity increase or decrease vulnerability or physical risk to the child?

Information: To what degree may the perceived or actual information the child gains through the peacebuilding activity increase or decrease vulnerability or physical risk to the child?

# Safety

## PHYSICAL SAFETY

*What level of increased physical risk may occur in any of the following areas because of the child's peacebuilding involvement:*

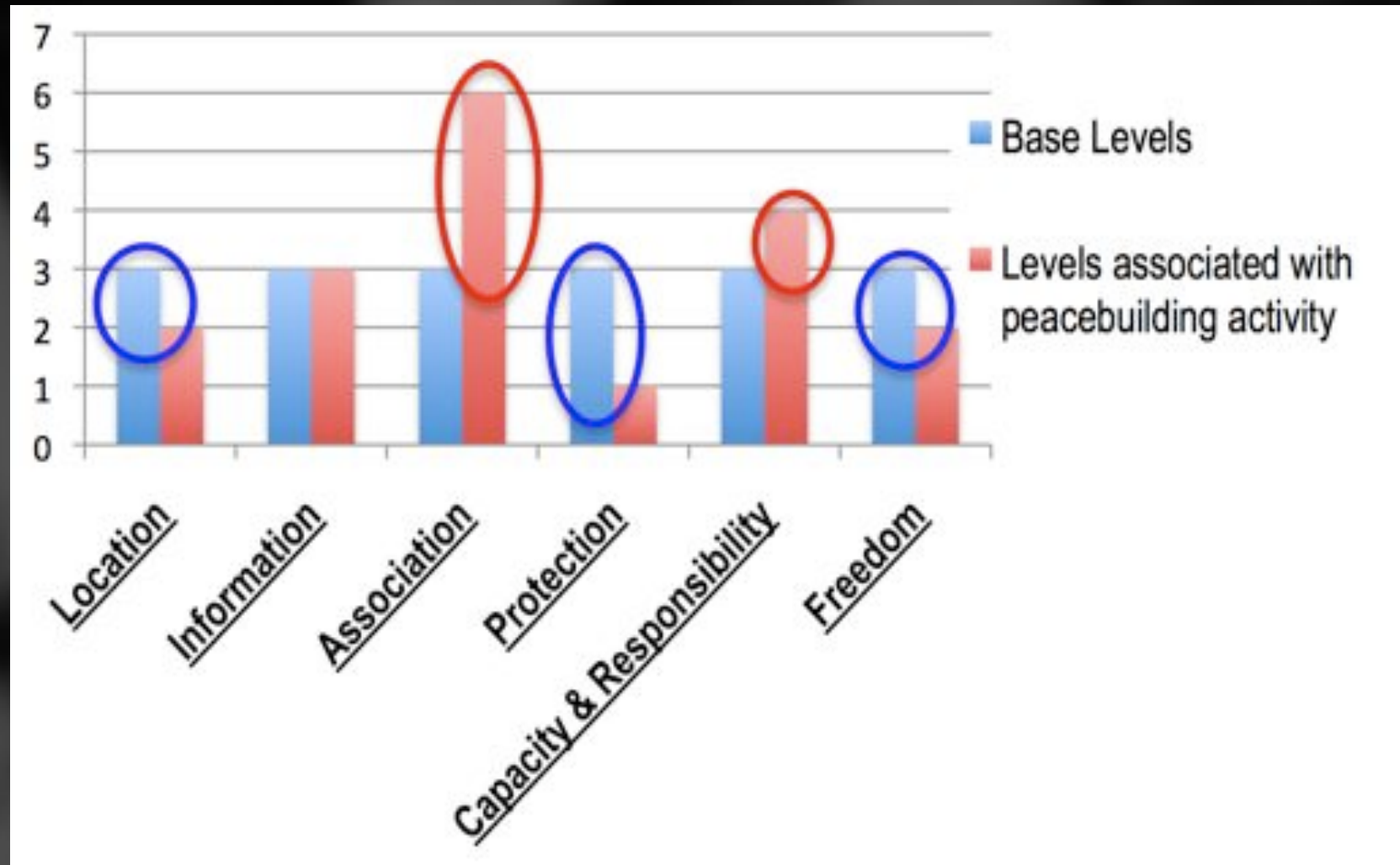
Association: To what degree may the perceived or actual relationships or associations the child gains through the peacebuilding activity increase or decrease vulnerability or physical risk to the child?

Protection: To what degree will the physical protection offered at or after the peacebuilding activity increase or decrease vulnerability or physical risk to the child?

From what sources will the child receive protection?

# Safety

Increases or Decreases in levels of Physical Safety



# Safety

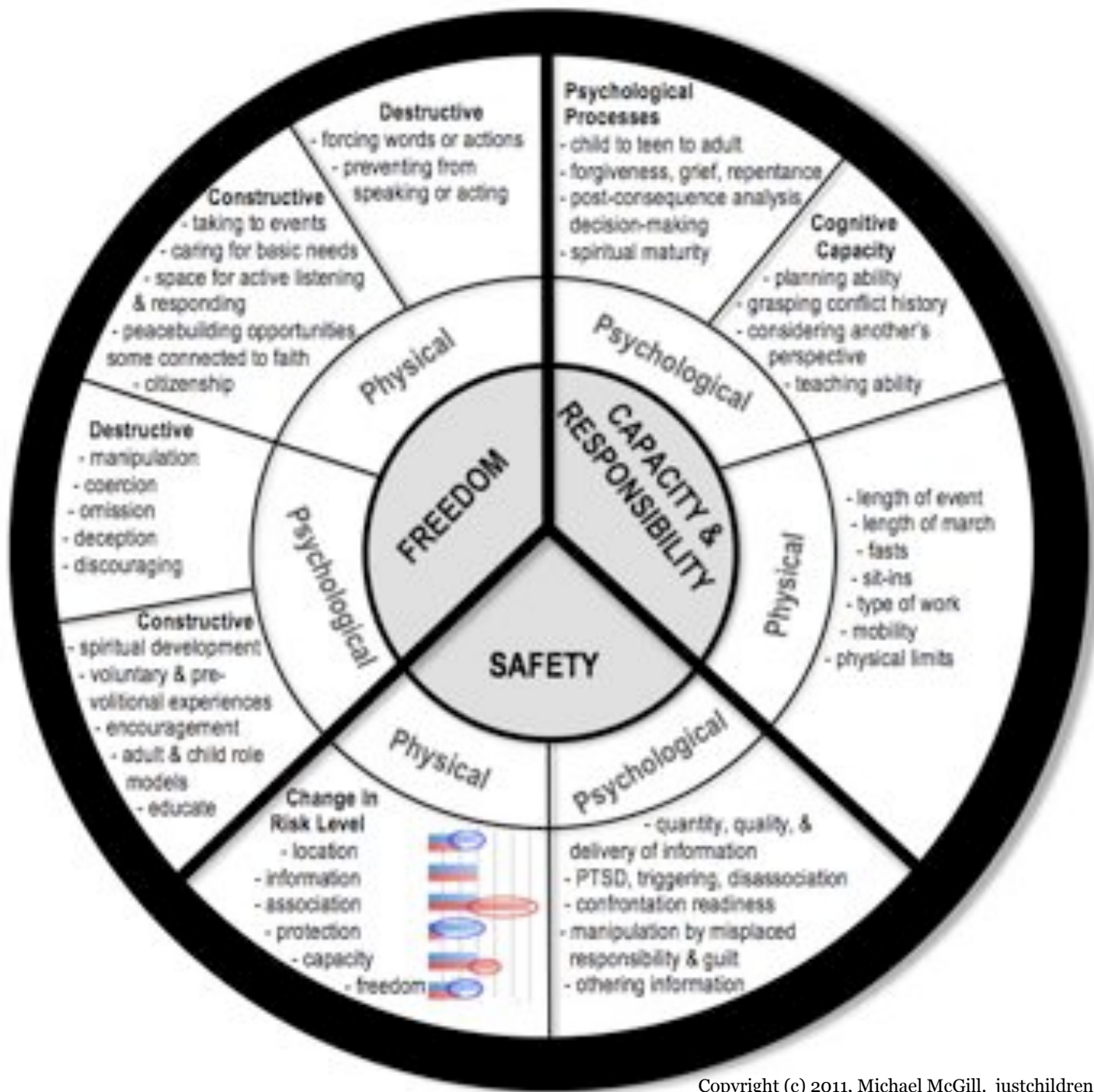
## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- Is past trauma delaying a child's psychological development?
- Are peacebuilding experiences or information, which seem age appropriate, triggering past memories and re-traumatizing the child?
- Is the child psychologically prepared to for confrontation that may occur in a peacebuilding activity?

# Safety

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- How could the information be delivered with a developmentally appropriate method that helps orient the child to the issues without suggesting undue responsibility?
- Are a sufficient number of competent adults with significant knowledge of the children present, awareness of potential psychological risks, and knowledge of how to protect children from such risks supporting the peacebuilding activity?



# Nurture Young Peacebuilders

# 1. Develop Young Peacebuilders Working Partnerships.

Support local leaders and trained partnership facilitators in expanding and sustaining working partnerships with religious groups, organizations, government, departments of education and others who can help equip large numbers of children with peacebuilding skills.

## 2. Increase Training Resources For Young Peacebuilders.

Through these working partnerships develop a variety of peacebuilding and citizenship training tools for children of different ages. These training resources can then be adapted for use in different contexts.

### 3. Measure & Increase Impact With Research Through Local Universities.

Where Young Peacebuilders Partnerships take root, multi-year scholarship programs can help build capacity in academic institutions to support research on the Young Peacebuilders project and help improve its impact.

## 4. Document The Process To Help Others Nurture Young Peacebuilders in new contexts.

updated manual will take advantage of ongoing experience and research to help others expand this transformative process to new contexts.

# Nurture Young Peacebuilders

For more information  
contact:

Michael McGill

[Mike@JustChildren.org](mailto:Mike@JustChildren.org)

[www.JustChildren.org](http://www.JustChildren.org)