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Issue Paper

“Children and Women Associated with Armed Forces and Groups”²

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Executive summary

In the field, many questions arise regarding the efficiency of DDR processes for children. Experience shows that DDR programmes can adversely affect children if designed inappropriately.

The challenge is not only one of ensuring that all children are eligible for DDR benefits and access DDR programmes. Indeed, progress has been made in this area. The publication of standards captured in the “Paris Commitments” (February 2007), the “Paris Principles” (February 2007), and the “UN Integrated Standards on DDR” (IDDRS, December 2006) are a measure of the progress made in recognising the specific treatment required for children in DDR processes.

Rather the challenge is two-fold: 1) to recognise that the release and demobilisation of children should be driven by international legal standards prohibiting the recruitment of children, rather be driven by a concern for security; and 2) that long term reintegration, in contrast to short term reinsertion, should be the driving force behind DDR from the outset to ensure long term sustainability.

With regard to the first challenge stated, there is a growing international consensus, led in part by African Nations through the African Charter³, that the recruitment of children under 18 is illegal and among the worst forms of child labour. This growing consensus requires that child demobilisation (or “release”) and reintegration should not depend on a peace settlement. The mechanisms and structures for the release and reintegration of children can be set up before a formal peace agreement is signed, a peacekeeping mission is deployed an adult programme is agreed upon and broader security sector reform is established. This principle was agreed to at the international conference held in Paris in February 2007 during which 59 states⁴, 15 from Africa, committed to 20 principles, including:

” To adhere to the principle that the release of all children recruited or used unlawfully by armed forces or groups shall be sought unconditionally at all times, including during armed conflict, and that actions to secure the release, protection and reintegration of such children should not be dependent on a cease-fire or peace agreement or on any release or demobilisation process for adults”⁵.

With regard to the second remaining challenge identified, reintegration, the challenge is increasingly to ensure that programmes are designed to facilitate broad reintegration and prevent re-recruitment. Programmes should not be seen to “compensate” or “reward” children, but ensure their rights and the rights of other children affected by conflict are upheld and protected. Furthermore, as the war destroyed their living environment, children do not return to a community which has remained unaffected by the conflict during their absence. Communities themselves have been devastated during the conflict and Child protection and reintegration programmes cannot limit themselves to targeting

³ Requires States Parties to refrain from recruiting any child African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990), *entered into force* Nov. 29, 1999.

⁴ See attached list for participants.

⁵ Commitment #5, The Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups” February 2007.

children, but must incorporate assistance to the broader community as both actor and beneficiary.

Agencies' capacities to develop programmes are linked to the funding options offered. While funding is often quite substantial for child-focused programmes, a number of constraints related to the way funding is provided remain. These include ensuring access to funds for children who were in groups that are not signatories to peace-agreements as well as access to funds for longer term reintegration programmes that benefit the broader community affected by the conflict.

Prevention of re-recruitment remains an outstanding challenge. To be successful, prevention of recruitment must take into account the various reasons why children are incorporated into armed forces and groups in the first place. It is essential to address the attitudes which allow children to participate, and to improve the circumstances of children's lives which lead them to make such dangerous choices. Successful prevention requires a collaborative set of actions, inclusive of all actors, relevant to the national or regional context in which children are, or are likely to be recruited.

The objective of reintegration informs and guides all stages of the child's return to civilian, family and community life. Even if the majority of children should be returned to or reintegrated with their family and community as soon as possible, there may be some children who will benefit from a period of intensive support. When family reunification is not possible or advisable, and when the use of a Transit Centre is required, it is important that time spent in a transit centre is kept to a minimum as it can adversely affect long-term reintegration. Alternative forms of care, depending on the local context and children's individual needs, should be considered.

In order to support reintegration, several actions should be undertaken: support to the family, alternative care, holistic socio-economic approaches, education, economic reintegration psycho-social support, health care and follow-up. All these actions need competent, properly prepared staff, able to make a long-term commitment. In addition, the "economic" part of the process must be considered a broader, long term and costlier aspect as the task arises within an economic fabric that itself has been destroyed.

At the heart of the issue are the needs of girls who don't experience the same realities as boys. Programmes fail to respond to their specific needs during a conflict. Girls suffer a wide spectrum of unequal treatment and abuse as they are subjected to prejudice from their communities, commanders and the formal DDR process which focuses on male combatants. These negative experiences contribute to limiting their access to quality programming, thereby considerably reducing their reintegration capacities. In addition, their unique potential is often forgotten by programmes which apply inappropriate models, projected on boys' cases and a return to an unrealistic past situation.

In the face of such difficulties, Child Protection Agencies recognize the importance of reflecting on specific approaches for girls and making provisions to implement them. For the past few decades, a significant body of research has emerged about how girls can be identified and assisted in ways that do not further stigmatise them. There are several concrete responses to these difficulties including promoting a culture of equity where rights are respected and responding to specific needs of girls.

Introduction

Despite the existence of a legal framework and considerable efforts by the international community since Graça Machel's report in 1996, the use of adolescents and children by armed forces and groups continues in all African countries in conflict. Their recruitment takes diverse forms (voluntary or forced, individual or familial) and they take on diverse roles: combatant, porter, cook, sexual service provider, forced marriage,. Due to their association, children are exposed to significant risks to their lives, development, and futures. Their rights as children are denied.

Programmes to support their release and reinsertion into civilian life have targeted children since the 1990s⁶. These programmes face many challenges and fail to reach their objectives for a variety of reasons. Among them are the following:

Even if targeted and provided for, children can be excluded due to lack of awareness of rules by officers in charge of the process, inadvertent impact of procedures (e.g. requiring the demonstration of use of a weapon) ; some prefer deliberately chose not to be linked with the programmes, fearing consequent stigmatisation (this is particularly the case for the girls).

Girls and their children are frequently under-represented in programmes. . Responses frequently inadequately take into account their specific needs and the social, political and cultural contexts.

Even when demobilisation programmes provide children the opportunity to be released, they run the risk of being re-recruited (e.g. Ivory Coast, DRC, and Sudan).

Reintegration support programmes fail to address the needs of all children due to a weak capacity to support short and long term efforts. In particular, we don't know how to address specific problems of girls who face more difficulties for reintegration.

Furthermore,

Despite their active participation in conflicts, voluntary or not, girl combatants are rarely taken into account by demobilization programmes; when they are, their specific needs are neglected. Girls face greater obstacles to reintegration than men, and programmes fail to address these difficulties: they are surrendered by their "war husbands", are responsible for taking care of children, are excluded from the communities, and do not have access to land, economic support or employment.

Over the past two decades several studies have been carried out, many exchanges between actors have taken place and specific programmes have been implemented to protect children, prevent against recruitment and provide for their demobilization and reinsertion. Elements such as principles and good practice have been elaborated (Cape Town Principles⁷, Paris Commitments⁸, Paris Principles⁹, IDDRS¹⁰), yet challenges have emerged and continue to need reflection and exchange.

⁶ It is believed that awareness of the widespread use of children first came to light, and was responded to, in Demobilisation of groups in Mozambique.

⁷ The Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilisation and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa, (1997)

The present document does not cover all the aspects emerging from past experience, but tries to underline some questions to be discussed and considered at this conference following the recommendations in Freetown in 2005.

First, some general aspects crossing over child demobilisation and reinsertion programmes are presented and more specific aspects linked to three phases: prevention, demobilisation/release, reinsertion/reintegration are outlined. Finally, it will tackle issues related more specifically to girls associated with armed forces and groups.

Cross-cutting issues

Competing Objectives between child protection programmes and formal DDR processes

Many questions arise regarding the efficiency of DDR processes for children. Experience shows (e.g. Liberia¹¹) that DDR programmes can be disastrous for children for a variety of reasons:

- Delays in launching the formal process prevent children from being released. In other cases, due to political or security priorities, the process is accelerated leading to a « massive » release of children without proper preparation.

- Not all children are included because the identification and screening mechanisms are ill conceived.

- The process is conducted under military conditions that do not enable “self-demobilized” children or girls to join without fear of stigmatization or abuse.

- Mission staff are rarely qualified to guarantee child protection.

- The funding is too often based on or restricted to the “mechanics” of the demobilisation and fails to take into account the community needs and those of other children affected by the armed conflict.

- DDR is a short-term process, whereas child protection is a process that unfolds over a longer period of time.

- The « mechanical » aspect of the formal process leads to the belief that things can be easily settled using the same procedures for everyone. Child protection, however, needs an individual approach.

To better understand and mitigate these difficulties, it is necessary to reflect on the foundation of such programmes. Despite efforts to reach a common understanding, child protection and DDR programmes do not share the same objectives. Formal DDR processes aim to provide country security, whereas child protection programmes aim to

⁸ The Paris Commitments to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment and Use by Armed Forces and Armed Groups (February 2007)

⁹ The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Groups and Forces (February 2007)

¹⁰ The UN Integrated DDR Standards, (December 2006)

¹¹ Interagency Evaluation of the Disarmament and Demobilisation Programme for Children Associated with the Fighting Forces in Liberia - 2005

re-establish children's rights and improved living conditions. Even if these two objectives may coincide, there is inherent tension between them.

Disagreements emerge. For example, during the identification and release (or demobilisation) phase, these differences might include the following:

Child protection actors will prioritise the identification of children associated with armed groups and forces (boys and girls, combatants and non-combatants) who need to be separated from /released by of these groups, in order to return to a civilian life. They will also attempt to identify children who have already left these groups on their own and who need support for their reintegration, motivated by restoring rights and achieving well-being

For security conscious actors managing the demobilisation process, priority will be given to identify, disarm and demobilize children who fought to eliminate this security risk. Children may be oriented towards appropriate programmes which provide cash allowances. Attention may therefore focus on verifying child membership to an armed group or force.

Child protection actors will try to access « invisible » children who did not fight, while DDR actors try to access combatants. DDR actors may require weapons or other evidence as a condition to access to the programme, whereas child protection actors try to ensure that children who did not directly fight can also access their programmes.

This example shows the misunderstandings and contradictions that can exist throughout the process and which cannot be resolved without better communication and the establishment of common objectives.

It is therefore misleading to consider the demobilisation/release and reinsertion/reintegration of children as a part of the formal DDR process. DDR priorities are at times in opposition to the best interests of children.

Prioritizing security issues over child rights causes formal DDR programme priorities to dominate child protection programs. The experience of Liberia illustrates this tension and demonstrates that even when provisions are made for children at the policy level, these are not necessarily implemented:

“The interpretation of the role of children in the fighting forces and their involvement in the Disarmament and Demobilisation varied considerably between the military and the CPAs. The predominant perception was that the DDRR was planned and implemented within a security paradigm and that the military view dominated decision making and implementation. Consequently, a holistic approach for children was not developed.

Although the DDRR Framework document describes the prioritisation of children in the DD process, this was never translated into action. In general, the military perceived only those posing a military threat to be eligible for the DD; eligibility was not considered according to the Cape Town Principles. Younger children and children without arms were not seen as a threat and at times were given last priority or even left out of the DD process.”

Most Military Observers (MilObs) found that the inclusion of boys and girls without weapons was confusing and subject to changing orders by superiors. Often decision making was open to personal interpretation on the ground, and some MilObs expressed the opinion that it was wrong to let children who did not know how to operate weapons into the DD programme. This was based on the commonly-held opinion that the children did not pose a real military threat; conversely, children who were capable of using weapons and inflicting damage to humans and property would be considered soldiers, not children, and therefore should be treated as adults.

Age determination was a major challenge which led to some eligible children being excluded. In Liberia, birth records are often not issued, and as such there is no precise way to determine the age of most children. Although social workers from CPAs helped in age verification, ex-combatants tried to be identified as children or adults depending on their perceptions of the benefits provided to the respective group.

“Some girls reported that their friends were rejected because they had faulty weapons. They were hesitant to report for demobilisation because they feared that they would be asked to dismantle weapons as proof of their engagement in the fighting forces”.

Eligibility

The conflicting objectives between child protection and DDR programmes also affect decisions regarding who should benefit from them. Several situations arise requiring actors to be more flexible in their analysis and response.

In some cases it is difficult to tell the difference between children associated with fighting forces and “dependents” who might have been exposed to similar conditions as children associated with the armed forces and groups, but who likely have different needs.

Many minors associated with armed forces or groups are adolescents and responses to this group are not always the same as for younger children. Very few programmes, however, take into account this specificity when responding to young adults who were recruited as children.

Actions taken to improve the situation of released/demobilized children may be interpreted as favouring individuals, or rewarding them for having actively participated in the conflict, while other children in the community may require the same attention. This contributes to the stigmatization of demobilized children.

The key question should not be whether children have the “right” to access to the program, but whether the program addresses the children’s specific needs. Once again, programmes do not intend to reward, compensate, children for having been associated with an armed force or group, but to address their needs and provide an environment where their rights are respected. Clearly, activities which would make them appear “privileged” contradict the objectives of reintegration and increase stigmatization.

Reintegration, reconstruction, long term commitment

During and after the conflict: changed context

It is important to highlight the context in which the child reintegration programmes are developed. One of the mistakes of reintegration programmes is that they prescribe specific solutions regardless of the broader context of a child's situation.

Conflict creates deep changes at all levels. However, reintegration is frequently conceived of as a return to a past situation: to relationship networks, activities, family links, which are assumed to have remained static. It is easy to forget that families and communities might themselves have undergone significant change. Yet programs tend to be designed to “erase the past.” Children and families may undergo psychological rehabilitation to make them forget what the children did.

However, the impact of conflict might have changed everything with which the child was once familiar: it might have wiped out his or her, status, relationships and the local and national socio-economic situation around him. It is important, therefore, to consider this when returning a child back to a family and community. Programmes should be designed to support those that remained and those that were affected by the conflict.

Links between Demobilization and Reintegration

The emphasis on formal processes in child-oriented programmes often means that the programs cover only immediate demobilization and reinsertion, and neglect reintegration, the most important component of child protection.

Whereas demobilization actions consider the short term, reintegration actions unfold over a longer period of time. If we consider that reintegration refers to « *the process by which children recovers a socially admitted place in a system which promotes his development and respect of his rights* »¹², the means used are more than merely separating children from armed groups. The process of reinsertion/reintegration will not be successful without including psychosocial, community based and economic programming. Programmes require a long-term focus and greater resources in order to succeed.

Some social reintegration must be implemented at the same time or before actions geared towards demobilization/release begin, especially those at the community level. However, a “mechanical” view of the process categorizes demobilization as “emergency” and reinsertion/reintegration as “development”. Consequently, funds for reinsertion/reintegration are granted *after* demobilization funds, sometimes with a latent period and/or from different donors (Cf. Funding sources) and lead to inappropriate reintegration.

Community-based approach

Communities are key actors in preventing recruitment, identifying and reintegrating children for the following reasons:

- Identifying children who avoided the formal process is most likely to occur through community,

¹² Research on Child Reintegration, UNICEF Kinshasa November 2004

- Raising community awareness can reduce stigmatization,
- The community can ensure the long-term reintegration of children
- Targeting community can help prevent recruitment.

Even if the main objective is protecting children, programmes should not limit themselves to this target group. As mentioned above, the community has been transformed by the conflict, and is not a place where children can easily return. Programmes supporting child reintegration must consider the community as actor and beneficiary in order to bridge this gap.

It is essential to address the community's responsibility in preventing recruitment and facilitating reintegration. COOPI's experience in the DRC¹³ shows that the practice of community rituals is much more efficient when children participate and communities have begun to reflect upon their responsibility in the situation.

These actions can be developed through child protection committees, children's and young people's clubs, sport and leisure groups, pre-existing networks and associations (religious groups, women's associations, etc.), and traditional leaders.

This approach, however, is not always easy to implement. The notion that transferring programmes to communities saves human resources is false, as community work often requires a great deal of input and in some cases may require even more support than providing direct care to children. However it remains the most effective way to ensure the sustainability of protection programmes and the effectiveness of a protective environment.

As in many cases, programmes can reenergize community networks and support the resilience of those that have been affected by the conflict.

In addition, one of the most important aspects of the community approach is that support is directed to the community as a whole instead of only individual children. One example of this is providing supplies and other forms of support to schools who accept to integrate demobilised students instead of giving individual grants to demobilized children.

Funding concerns

Agencies' capacities to develop programmes are linked to funding opportunities. These are outlined in the UN's Integrated DDR Standards¹⁴ while funding is often quite substantial for these types of programmes, a number of constraints remain related to the way funding is provided.

□ Multi-donor funds have some positive aspects, notably the volume of the funds and the leverage they exert by speaking with one voice to all actors. However, because child-focused programmes become linked to formal peace agreements, For instance, the funds are exclusively earmarked for the parties to a peace process and may lack flexibility to include children requiring support who are outside of peace processes.

¹³ Intervention psychosociale d'urgence pour la réintégration des filles associées aux forces et groupes armés et autres filles vulnérables dans le centre de développement de la condition féminine de la ville de Bunia – COOPI - Rapport de fin de la troisième phase (23 mars 2005 - 22 septembre 2005)

¹⁴ UN Integrated DDR Standards, December 2006, module 3.41 Finance and Budgeting.

□ Donors may fear making long term investments in an insecure environment. . A short-term approach limits possibilities for planning and investing in competent human resources (short-term contracts, little staff training, etc).

□ The funds that might be available to support reintegration with a long-term perspective are so-called “development funds”, which are not released at the outset of the programmes but during a post-emergency or transitional phase. Consequently, reintegration support activities cannot start at the same time as demobilization, and sometimes there is even a relatively long gap between funding allocated to demobilization and the release of funds for reintegration.

Peace agreements and security

Peace agreements can be a central component for developing the framework of demobilisation programmes but issues related children are rarely mentioned during this period.

Parts of peace agreements may even go against the best interest of children. For example, during security reform negotiations, children are included as part of the numbers of armed groups when in fact; their unlawful recruitment and armed groups who recruit children should be penalized. It has also been observed in DRC that some armed groups have recruited children in order to increase their numbers when registering and then gain power during negotiations.

National and regional coordination

In all of the scenarios described, coordination between agencies, government and all stakeholders for the development of common approaches and policies is paramount.

At the regional level, particularly when the majority of the conflicts have a regional aspect (Great lakes, Mano river and Cote d’Ivoire, Sudan/Chad, etc.), few initiatives have been developed to coordinate the different programmes.

The recent launch of a programme geared at fostering exchanges and coordination between the countries of the Mano River and Côte d’Ivoire provides valuable lessons learned.

Competencies and capacity building

Often times, there is not enough time to provide adequate training for social workers and other actors (family tracing officers and mediators). Agencies therefore give special attention to hiring people that are competent and trained for the task at hand. In order to facilitate common approaches and ensure a minimum standard of competencies, child protection agencies collaborate to provide training for all actors, usually coordinated by UNICEF (Cf. Liberia, DRC).

Programmes are highly dependant on the good will and competencies of the military personnel in charge of peacekeeping. It is imperative that they have the ability to support the process, collect information, advocate and build awareness, enforce principles of good behaviour towards children and implement rules in the area of child identification and screening. Therefore, Save the Children Sweden in collaboration with ECOWAS, has implemented a child protection training programme for the military before, during, and

after the conflicts in West Africa since 2000. When present, UNDPKO child protection advisors are in charge of facilitating these trainings, in conjunction with local child protection agencies. (Cf. trainings lead by “Caritas Makeni” and UNMSIL in Sierra Leone in 2002, after abuse allegations done by Save the Children)

Monitoring / Information concerning children / Databases

It is vital to collect and share information on children, including from the fighting forces, as soon as possible to provide the most effective response.

Several kinds of information can be collected for different purposes, as the process unfolds:

- Before demobilization/release: The number, age, origin of children present in armed groups, the conditions of their recruitment, their occupations, etc is useful information which will help organizations prepare for children’s reception and can be collected by those in contact with armed forces and groups;
- During the identification and screening process: Data which assists in determining eligibility criteria and interventions that are best suited to them;
- During the transition phase: Data on children’s families to expedite family tracing; personal data on the experience of each child so that their immediate needs can be best fulfilled;
- During legal proceedings against those responsible for recruiting children: data on the armed groups that used them, or on perpetrators of child abuse;
- After demobilization for follow-up purposes: the situation of children after they have been demobilized with their contact details.

Some of this information such as their military history or contact information can be used against children, or could be disclosed during legal proceedings. Collecting and disseminating information on children may present a potential threat and undermine confidence and security. Amnesty International documented these concerns in DRC in 2006.

It is believed that the collection of data will lead to a better understanding of situation and improved response. However, the collection of reliable and credible data is difficult and data may often be collected which is never used, or used in a compromising manner. In West Africa, a Sub Regional Project of Cooperation between Mano River countries and Cote d’Ivoire drafted principles, including those relating to confidentiality, and delineated standards for quantity and quality in data management, thereby managing tensions between concern for confidentiality of the individual and the collective interest of accountability.

Prevention / Protection

Children are recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups for a number of reasons. Many children are forced, abducted or coerced; others may not be physically forced but are so by the circumstances of their lives. Young people are more likely to volunteer when they have few positive options in life, when they are unable to attend

school or access training or livelihood opportunities and when basic needs are not met. In these circumstances, joining an armed force or armed group may provide the best option or may appear to be a chance to bring about change for themselves or for their communities. Successful programmes to prevent recruitment take into account these realities and the various reasons for recruitment. They address the attitudes that allow children to participate and seek to improve the circumstances of their lives.

Successful prevention requires a collaborative set of actions, inclusive of all actors, including peacekeeping forces, which are relevant to the national or regional context in which children are, or are likely to be recruited. These include actions focused on the following:

- Recruiters: Child protection actors must engage with armed forces and groups, and fight against impunity
- Children : It is essential to break command structures, implement community reintegration activities for a broad range of beneficiaries, and recognize their particular vulnerabilities
- Legislators: The legal framework, improvement of children's safety, community sensitization and participation, birth registration, social mobilisation, advocacy and monitoring

Promoting the involvement of armed forces

In the area of prevention, emphasis is placed on exposing the practices of fighting forces that mistreat children. Programmes which attempt to influence and alter their practices, attitudes and behaviours with children, need to establish close contact with them and, within in well-defined limits, associate with them.

The purpose of this involvement is to both obtain information on the presence of children in their ranks, and to encourage them to set a minimum age of 18 years for recruitment. It is especially important to make them aware that girls whom they do not consider as "enrolled" should also be released. It is important to inform them of demobilization processes so that they can support them, such as, child identification and the provision of information to children.

A number of child protection training and information initiatives directed at government forces have been undertaken in West Africa, in particular by the organization "Save the Children Sweden" before, during and after a conflict. Non-state groups, however, rarely participate in such programmes.

Experience shows that actors must be vigilant in involving armed forces and groups in the process, as their lack of involvement can lead to a number of problems:

- When armed groups themselves are responsible for the identification of children eligible for demobilization, they may favour some children and "overlook" others.
- As a way of avoiding their responsibilities and avoiding pressure in relation to the recruitment of children, they may make unrealistic suggestions about what children are entitled to or should be offered by child protection agencies after release.

- Commanders can maintain command structures even after the release of the children, as the experience in DRC demonstrates when members of the military worked as supervisors of children in the first demobilization experience in Kinshasa. . Some officers in the DRC demanded to visit the transit centres before they agreed to discharge the children and others regularly came to the transit centres to “talk with the children”. In Liberia, some commanders have started businesses and are employing children previously under their command.

Child protection agencies need to exercise caution in managing these relationships of this nature. They must be mindful of their own security, be wary of being considered accomplices by the communities, and must maintain the right to expose any abusive practices of those groups, while also maintaining communication with them.

Positive alternatives to recruitment

Young people may join armed forces or armed groups to earn an income or to support themselves and their families. Prevention from recruitment requires maintaining livelihoods and reducing family’s poverty.

Access to education and basic services, life skills training and vocational training should also be promoted for all boys and girls. In addition to providing opportunities to learn, education provides children with competencies that support resilience, builds hope for the future, and prevents boredom and idleness.

Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Camps

Refugee and internally displaced person camps are likely places for recruitment of children. This area requires special attention and additional measures including:

- preventing infiltration of armed groups in camps
- positioning refugee and IDP camps at a reasonable distance from front lines and borders,
- quickly organizing specific educational and vocational programmes for children and adolescents, including group activities which offer alternatives to joining armed forces and armed groups
- registering children and adolescents, especially unaccompanied and separated children
- applying ‘Best Interest of the Child Principle’ in cases of repatriation

Release from armed forces and armed groups / Transition

Reaching the children: formal and informal process

As the introduction highlighted, not all children who are supposed to be beneficiaries of these projects are being reached, especially girls and children who leave informally.

To improve children's access to programmes, we seek to improve the "formal" identification of children and, identify children who left the fighting forces of their own accord through communities.

The effectiveness of both approaches is increased if children are appropriately informed of the eligibility criteria for these programmes, their "rights," and benefits.

A number of reasons explain why children do not go through a formal process. These include:

- They escaped or were released before the process started,
- They were misinformed about the eligibility criteria and believe that a weapon is necessary or only fighters are eligible
- They were manipulated by commanders because of demobilization benefits (example of TSA in Liberia),
- They prefer anonymity for fear of stigmatization,
- They simply do not wish to go through a military environment again for identification purposes
- They are victims of incorrect implementation of eligibility criteria, either from commanders, or from the people in charge of identification and screening,
- They are held back by commanders (mainly girls who are considered spouses),
- They may not have the time or the opportunity to register due to long distances in geographical areas with little coverage. This is mainly the case of girls, but also of a number of boys.

The document From conflict to hope : Children in Sierra Leone's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme¹⁵ presents advice to improve children's access: *"To better ensure that those who need DDR are included in the process – and those that see it as a ticket to benefits are not – certain features must be present.*

- First, properly trained screeners (Military Observers and social workers) are essential for accurate and speedy processing. This includes screeners experienced in working with children, conversant in local languages and in English, and enough female screeners to accommodate girls going through the process.

- Second, security – just the perception of it – is critical to welcoming children. Physical security is a key incentive (or disincentive) to entering the system; protection can be enhanced through improved fencing, lighting and patrolling by security forces.

- Third, delays in processing lead to safety concerns, abuses of the system and unnecessary suffering by the most vulnerable, children. Quick, safe and comprehensive processing instils greater confidence in the system."

¹⁵ From conflict to hope : Children in Sierra Leone's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme – UNICEF 2004

Findings from a study conducted in the DRC by SC-UK Reaching the Girls¹⁶ indicate: *“The issues of obtaining the release of the girls associated with armed groups and of reinsertion assistance is extremely complex. This study has concluded that only a minority of girls will be reached through DDR formal processes: disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion, as the military side of the DDR concept favours hindering the release of girls. In order to reach the girls associated with armed groups, it is better, first and foremost, to use community-based approaches which address ideas and social attitudes relating to girls employed in armed groups.”*

Benefits to children (cash allowances, kits, packages)

Due to the perverse incentives associated with cash payments to children in Liberia, child protection agencies have stressed that cash payments should not be given to children as part of a demobilization process. This statement is also part of IDDRS.

Several agencies are also concerned about the influence of adult cash payments on children.

An evaluation of the South Sudan DDR programme for children, “Falling out”, demonstrates that providing demobilization kits, even if they respond to short term expectations from beneficiaries, has some disadvantages:

- They only reach those who go through the formal process
- They can be seen as rewards
- They create expectations
- They stigmatize children in relation to other children in the community

Therefore, some child protection agencies recommend that release packages are thought of as temporary assistance to the child and his/her family, such as clothes and medical care, and not as long-term support. The debate about the level of material assistance to be provided to individual children has been captured by Chris Robertson and Una MacCauley writing on the experience in South Sudan¹⁷:

“(…) Discussion about reintegration pivots around the perennial debate about the provision of individual assistance to CAFF versus broader community-based approaches. Arguments in support of individually targeted assistance tend to revolve around the two main issues whether they need some targeted support to help them begin to reintegrate. During the first phase children were given kits on arrival at the transit centres and on their return home. Real or perceived promises to provide community infrastructure in northern Bahr el Ghazal which would offer alternatives to the army were not fully realised. In contrast, in the second phase no individual benefits or packages were provided. This policy met considerable opposition from the local implementers, the civil administration, the families and the children themselves. But while many children expected support, there appear to have been many other, more powerful, reasons for leaving the

¹⁶ Reaching the Girls - Study on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo - Save the Children UK and the NGO Group: CARE, IFESH and IRC -November 2004 -Beth Verhey, Consultant

¹⁷ Extracts from “The return and reintegration of child soldiers in Sudan: the challenges ahead – article by Chris Robertson (Consultant) and Una McCauley (Protection Officer UNICEF OLS)” 2004

military than a one-off reintegration package. Reunification with their families, access to education and freedom from the risks and rigid discipline of the military were probably the most significant”

Screening

The screening stage is critical to enabling children to access programmes. It serves both as a way to check eligibility and allows children to collect information that will direct them to the most appropriate solutions including family tracing.

The general consensus is that screening should be conducted by or in the presence of child protection officers duly trained for this purpose. In addition, security forces should be present during this particularly sensitive and delicate phase. The challenge of identifying children is captured in the study on Sierra Leone’s process¹⁸:

“Military Observers reported feeling threatened at the reception centres to register children as adults and adults as children. The environment was tense, combatants were armed, and security offered by the peacekeeping force was insufficient in the early months of the programme. But there also existed a lack of training with the Military Observers, and a failure to make them aware of the long-term goal of reintegration. Some adopted an attitude of military solidarity with the children, believing the children should have the same ‘rewards’ as the adults for giving in their guns. Such observers would allow children into the adult programme with no understanding of the long-term implications. Combined with the frequency in observer turnover, this reflected a failure to connect disarmament with the long-term process of reintegration”.

Girls and the release process

Girls do not participate in release programmes for a number of reasons. These include a lack of information or misinformation, a perception that they are not eligible, or not seeing any benefit in the process. Girls may be afraid of what will happen or be too ashamed to expose themselves. They may be kept hidden by their commanders or “bush husbands” who wish to hold on to them, or may feel a connection to boys or men with whom they have formed a relationship, albeit an abusive one. Previous DDR programmes have excluded girls even when the definition of a child soldier included them.

Few girls enter formal release processes; most simply return to their communities in the hopes that they will be welcomed and accepted by their family and community. Perhaps because so few girls enter a formal process, the conditions are rarely appropriate and girls may not even believe their safety can be assured there.

Girls who meet the criteria of “children recruited and used by an armed force or armed group” must be allowed to enter a release process if they wish to do so. Criteria should therefore be more clearly delineated and communicated to all involved in screening.

¹⁸ Extracts from “From conflict to hope : Children in Sierra Leone’s Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme” UNICEF 2005

To improve access of girls, some elements must be taken into account:

- Circulation of information through appropriated « mediators » (peers, women combatants, etc.)
- The presence of female employees at all times during the process
- Measures implemented to ensure the safety and protection of girls in residential care
 - Safe and private accommodation provided for girls where this is required, either at cantonment or transit//interim care centres or any residential care sites, with specific health services, including reproductive health care, separate washing and toilet facilities, adapted hygiene kits, and clean birthing kits
 - Nutrition and health care for infants and young children, etc.

Reintegration

Reintegration is the final phase of all processes releasing children from armed forces and armed groups. Therefore, reintegration is guided by all preceding stages of the child's re-entry into civilian, family and community life, because activities implemented before will influence his/her capacity to reintegrate. Some reintegration activities should be carried out even before children are released, in particular the preparation of communities for the return of children.

Transition

Often, especially when the demobilization process has unfolded over a short period, of time, resources are mainly invested in transit and family tracing activities. A need arises, therefore, to redirect support for children in their new environments by incorporating communities and various government services offered. If this transition has not been properly planned, delays are likely to leave children "lost" in the process, as assistance is not offered quickly enough or a lack of follow-up or mediation results in various forms of exploitation or rejection of children returning home.

Transit care

In many cases transit centres are required for children who need interim care. If properly managed, these can be helpful in providing support and protection to children until they are reintegrated. Alternatives to institutional care are also recognized, especially day centres and foster families.

Rehabilitation

After release from an armed group or armed force, most children should be returned to their families and communities or integrated into a family and community environment as soon as possible. There may be some children who benefit from a period of rehabilitation provided through intensive support in the community, in residential care or another

supported environment. Any such rehabilitation plan should be firmly rooted in the community, and where possible involve the family.

Children who require particular support include those who have drug or alcohol abuse problems, serious health problems, have experienced rape/sexual abuse, have witnessed or were forced to participate in atrocities, whose family cannot be found or who have died, or those who face rejection or hostility from their family and community.

In some communities, children cannot reintegrate because they are viewed and view themselves as carrying bad spirits from their experiences with the armed forces and armed groups. In these cases, appropriate cultural practices to “purify children from bad spirits” are part of reintegration support activities, so long as these are not harmful to children. In some contexts these may be essential to a child’s rehabilitation and to their acceptance.

Family tracing and reunification

Generally speaking, the importance of family tracing is recognized, at the least to reconnect children with their families. Best practice requires the following: tracing as soon as possible, coordination amongst actors, verification of family links (as children sometimes give the names of their commanders), active participation of children at all phases (in particular their previous agreement for reunification), intensive support during reunification.

Family reunification is not always the most appropriate solution and is not sufficient on its own. However, even when family reunification is not possible or advisable, re-establishing family connections and maintaining contact are very important.

Alternative care

When family reunification is not possible or advisable, it is important that children do not stay too long in transit centres, which are not suitable to support long-term reintegration. Agencies therefore, try to identify and implement various forms of alternative care depending on the local context and children’s needs.

Several types of alternative care have been tried, for instance in Sierra Leone, and provide lessons for the future.

Foster care may be more appropriate for younger children but carries a greater risk of exploitation. Preparing foster families and monitoring them are two critical factors in reducing the likelihood of exploitation.

Supporting reintegration

The document: “*No place like home: children’s experience of reintegration in the Kailahun district of Sierra Leone*”¹⁹ published by Save the Children describes the elements of reintegration as seen by children:

¹⁹ No Place Like Home? Children’s experiences of reintegration in the Kailahun District of Sierra Leone – Save the Children 2004

- To be reunified with the family and the community (*“It means to go back to your family or community and live with them after the war.”* 16-year-old boy, other separated)

- Care and attention within the family (*“Not only being together, but if they take care of you.”* 13-year-old girl, ex-soldier)

- Acceptance and total involvement in the community (*...no more grumble, no more harassment, and no more tondet [reprisals]. Work together with them and share fun with one another.”* 15-year-old boy, ex-soldier)

- Peace and security (*to live peacefully with people and to drop the bad ways you have been living...respect authority and obey laws.”* 16-year-old boy, ex-soldier)

- School and vocational training as a return to normal life

- Poverty and livelihood: being able to work on the parents’ farm and bringing a means of livelihood to the household are important.

Several effective approaches were highlighted during the interviews: support to the family, alternative care, holistic socio-economic approach, education, economic reinsertion, psychosocial support, health and follow-up. All these actions need competent, properly prepared staff, able to take a long-term approach.

Economic reinsertion / vocational training

Economic (re)integration of children and young people is a very important component to the process.

On the one hand, there is a pressing need to generate revenue rather quickly for children and young people, if only to occupy a place in the existing socio-economic environment. It is vital to show children that they can succeed and contribute to their families and communities without turning to violence or high risk income generation practices such as prostitution. This is particularly important for girls.

On the other hand, this is a complex and difficult enterprise due to scarcity of resources and skills available to children. Economic reinsertion activities require a high level of technical expertise and implementation by specialists in the field.

In addition, these activities cannot be conducted without taking into account the broader context of a destroyed economic fabric, making their implementation even more challenging.

Girls, including young mothers and those pregnant

Girls don’t experience the same realities as boys and programmes fail to respond to their specific needs.

During conflicts, girls receive a spectrum of unequal treatment including sexual abuse, exclusion, and violence. The military environment of war exacerbates gender relationships based on physical force and domination. Relationships between men and women are oriented around violence instead of sharing, and men wield their power through systematic sexual violence.

These negative experiences contribute to limiting girls' access to quality programming, thereby considerably reducing their capacity to reintegrate.

In some circumstances, conflicts transform girls' unequal status. Their membership to an armed force or armed group may provide them with more responsibility than their traditional roles. They may for the first time be able to voice their opinion and live equally with their male counterparts. This experience can help them develop new competencies and they may resent having to return to the less empowering traditional roles. They may prefer to leave the family or community and reside in urban centres where they don't face the same stigmatization.

Finally, girls are not only passive victims. Despite the traumas they suffered, many girls see themselves as resilient, capable, and able to take on responsibilities and develop income generating strategies. This potential is often overlooked by programmes that apply inappropriate models based on boys' experiences and an attempt to return to a past situation.

In the face of such difficulties, Child Protection Agencies recognize the importance of reflecting on specific approaches for girls and implementing them. Over the past few decades, a significant body of research has emerged around identifying and assisting girls in ways that do not further stigmatize them. These responses promote a culture of equity where women's rights and specific needs are respected and responded to.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Some girls, particularly girl mothers, used by armed forces and armed groups require greater support during rehabilitation or reintegration. This may involve a period in residential care or support upon their return to family or community. This time can be useful for promoting healing and adjustment, providing practical support, addressing health problems, and learning parenting skills, finding employment and preparing the community to which they will return.

Place for return

Girls may choose to remain with their "bush husbands" or commanders for a number of reasons including loyalty, fear that they will lose their child if they leave, or perceiving certain advantages to staying. Some girls are prevented from leaving their commanders. The questions remain: do girls really have a choice in leaving and how can programmes support their return to civilian life?

Girls, including young mothers, are often disappointed when they are not provided practical support and are rejected or ostracized by their families or communities upon return. Some girls feel acceptance is more likely if they return with material goods. However, providing subsidies is not the solution because, as we have seen in the past, they have resulted in family break ups stemming from arguments about how the money should be spent.

Not all girls wish to return to their communities; some may prefer to live in urban centres where they are invisible and can find ways of earning money.

Survival

Girls may become depressed and feel isolated if they are perceived as an additional burden on their family without value or opportunities to earn an income or participate in educational or vocational training programmes. This is especially true if other young people are told not to mix with them. Where families expect girls to provide an income, girls may have little choice but to turn to transactional sex or prostitution as a way of supporting themselves, their children and contributing to their families.

Despite these difficulties, many girls see themselves as resilient and capable. They are willing to work hard and believe that with minimal support such as childcare, they can succeed in generating income through small businesses.

Role of communities

The role of communities, is critical for girls. Communities must be educated to consider girls are primarily victims of the conflict and need special assistance to rehabilitate. Girls, especially those who are pregnant or young mothers, need support from family, and the wider community. Research has showed that even when girls don't return to their community, re-establishing links with their mothers, grand mothers or any other female figures in the community is of great importance.

Strategies to support reintegration must therefore ensure girls are accepted which may include promoting traditional rituals, providing opportunities to make reparations, and developing links with women's groups.

Where family are unable or unwilling to provide childcare or teach parenting skills there may be others in the community, such as older women, who can do this. Important and influential persons in the community (elders or chiefs, recognized females) can be important in encouraging the community to support returning girls.

Specific programmes addressing stigmatization

Programmes that give specific attention to girls risk ostracizing them further. The key to any intervention is consultation with and leadership by those affected as they generate useful suggestions such as integrating programmes for youth or vulnerable girls into those for the wider population.

Education, vocational training

Access to education or training programmes is likely to be even more difficult for girls than for boys for a variety of reasons including cultural expectations, poverty, the need for girls to earn a livelihood, work at home, or look after children.

In addition, training programmes may not include occupations considered suitable for girls. Those that are suitable, for example, soap making, may be problematic as they do not generate sufficient demand to sustain employment.

Support to girls should create conditions which allow them to participate such as providing childcare, food for their children, flexibility in hours and promoting their involvement in employment opportunities usually reserved for men.

Sexual and Gender based violence (SGBV)

In many conflicts SGBV towards girls particularly for girls who have been recruited and used by armed forces is endemic. Girls may be taken as a “wife” and forced to provide sexual services or be subjected to rape on multiple occasions by different men. Boys are also used for sex, and while it is difficult to determine the extent of this problem given the associated taboo, it appears that this problem does not affect as many boys as it does girls.

Possible physical side effects of SGBV include physical injury, reproductive health problems including infertility, sexually transmitted infections (STI's), pregnancy with the risk of induced abortion, and miscarriage or birthing in the bush without access to medical care. For all girls, but particularly for girls for whom this is their first sexual experience, such violations are likely to have profound and long lasting impacts on their mood, behaviour and self-esteem.

Experience shows that girls remain at risk of SGBV even after leaving an armed force or armed group. Girls at demobilisation sites or transit care facilities must be protected against further abuse. (see section on release).

Children born as a result of girls’ recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups

Many girls give birth during or after living with an armed force or armed group. If these offspring survive, they are likely to face numerous child protection problems. Experience shows they are likely to suffer from health problems, neglect, rejection and abuse or there may be custody battles with the father or his family. The legal status of these children according to both customary and international law is likely to be unclear.

Child protection agencies work with young mothers to develop programmes to understand the precise nature of problems faced by these children as infants and adults, to ensure birth registration and provide health care for the mother and child.

Operational conclusions and recommendations

This chapter is not comprehensive of the many studies and guidelines for programmes related to children associated with armed forces and groups, but proposes a number of general recommendations.

Links between formal programmes and child protection programmes

Child protection actors, aware that a close collaboration and coordination with formal DDR programmes is necessary, recommend that programmes for children are developed separate from formal DDR programmes. While such programmes cannot be implemented entirely independently, some provisions should be taken in order to reduce negative effects:

- implementing specific programmes for child protection that operate outside and sometimes before the DDR formal process begins (even when no formal DDR programme is implemented, efforts have to be made to release children and reintegrate them)

- modifying the funding rules of child-oriented programmes (funding separate from the formal DDR process, and from the outset covering a larger target including the entire community and other vulnerable – Cf. funding and beneficiaries chapters).

- ensuring that child protection specialists are part of discussions about the formal DDR process as soon as possible (especially during peace negotiations and programme design) so that provisions for children are included and that other provisions do not counteract child-based programmes (awareness-building, eligibility, subsidies and kits, site management, modes of identification and screening, etc.).

- making release and reintegration of children out of militarised cantonment sites possible even for the children who go through the cantonment sites of formal DDR process, by separating children from adults as soon as possible

- taking part in child protection training and awareness-building activities for the officers in charge of the formal process

- providing mechanisms to reach children who have eluded the formal process (example: the “Girls Left Behind” project designed in Sierra Leone by UNICEF and its partners).

Who are the beneficiaries of the programmes / Inclusive approach / Community approach?

In order to ensure that decisions are made for the best interests of the child as enshrined in the CRC and the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of Children, the following should be applied:

- the specific needs of children and adolescents should be at the centre of the decisions

- choices should always be made that provide appropriate solutions to the children rather than the applying of a procedure to a category.

For example, it would probably be useless and harmful to separate children (auto-demobilized or dependents) from their families because they fit into the criteria of “children associated with armed forces and groups” and should follow the procedures. A more appropriate response would be to identify the needs of the children in order to access to their rights.

UN IDDRS has proposed a number of specific recommendations (Cf. IDDRS OG5.20 Table 5.20.1: Key focus areas for young ex-combatant reintegration programmes & Table 5.20.2: Labour market measures to improve reintegration prospects of young combatants)

Programmes should incorporate other vulnerable groups and respond to needs rather than vulnerability categories. This will also allow programmes to reach children who avoided the formal DDR process. This approach is promoted by the “Paris commitments” and has been encouraged by the “inclusive approach” principle in the “Paris Guidelines”. *“7.30 Children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups may be further stigmatised with a narrow provision of benefits and support only to that sector of children; community divisions and tensions can be increased. Inclusive programming which supports children who have been recruited or used as well as other vulnerable children benefits the wider community.”*

Given the complexity of the issue and the number of factors which interfere in programme success, target beneficiaries must include other groups than children. It is therefore necessary to:

- touch all environments affecting children (children themselves, their peers, families, communities, professional environments, etc.)

- give support to groups rather than individual children, for instance by providing supplies to the schools instead of giving individual grants to demobilized children.

- Develop links with other programmes as recommend in the “Paris Guidelines”: *“7.32 Programmes to support the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups should develop links with all programmes, policies and initiatives which may benefit these children and their families either directly, for example through local or national social welfare programmes, or indirectly, through reconstruction and rehabilitation of national institutions and other development programmes”.*

Funding sources

Given the influence that funding has on programmes and the recent experiences of multi-donor systems funding such programmes, it is essential to reconsider the modalities of funding.

Several aspects are important, particularly the amount of funds, their link with formal programmes, their duration, targets, requisites, approaches, and coherence with an integrated process

As the, “Paris Commitments” states:

(we commit ourselves...) 19: To ensure that any funding for child protection is made available as early as possible, including in absence of any formal peace process and formal disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) planning, and to also ensure that funding remains available for the time required and for activities in communities benefiting a wide range of children affected by armed conflict in order to achieve full and effective integration or reintegration into civilian life.

Benefits to children

If reintegration refers to « *the process by which children recovers a socially admitted place in a system which promotes his development and respect of his rights* »²⁰, then it must provide more than material or financial assistance, and should be developed around children in their environments. Child protection actors should base their actions on enhancing children’s resilience and self esteem, recognizing their capacities and vulnerabilities related to their age and needs, and trying to make them principal actors program at all stages of the programme cycle.

UN IDDRS states very clearly about kits and subsidies, (IDRRS - Table 5.30.1: Child-specific demobilization elements - Cash payments and benefits packages) : *“No monetary payments should be given to children during the demobilization phase. Children, families and communities should be clearly informed about the benefits*

²⁰ Recherche sur la réinsertion des enfants en rupture – UNICEF Kinshasa novembre 2004

provided by programmes during the reintegration phase, and they should understand who these benefits are for, and why they are being provided. All benefits and services should support the development of the child within the community”.

Therefore, some child protection agencies recommend that release packages are seen as providing temporary assistance such as clothes and medical care to the child and his/her family, and not as long-term support.

Actors other than child protection agencies should be included in economic reinsertion activities, in particular:

- the governments, to promote an environment that can create employment for young people;
- the donors, to incorporate child reintegration into DRSP and PPTE resources (programmes of poverty reduction based on reduction of national debt against social protection programmes) which offer long term perspectives;
- the private sector and “productive world”. For example in Rwanda, the ILO collaborates with the hotel and restaurant industries, crafts associations, companies, unions, employers’ organizations, etc.

Specific recommendations for girls associated with armed forces and groups

Responses to girls must promote a culture of equity where rights and needs are respected and responded to:

In general, programmes should:

- collect more information about girls and disaggregate data according to age and gender ;
- employ more girls in the programmes;
- give emphasis to education and vocational training for girls;
- develop more informal programmes ;
- learn from experience and expertise including findings on research and outcomes of pilot programmes for girls recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups;
- involve women’s groups in programmes;
- advocate for a culture of equity where rights are respected

In order to reach girls and facilitate their reintegration, programmes should:

- improve the identification of girls in the formal process by defining selection criteria and sensitizing agents in charge of identification and screening;
- improve information flows so they know what their rights and their possibilities are;
- identify them through the community and through discreet activities such as the establishment of girls’ clubs ;

- sensitize communities so they perceive girls as victims and can assist in their reintegration and respect their rights.

To respond to the problems encountered by girls, it is necessary to consider the following:

- the psycho-social aspects of sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies;
- health services including accessible, confidential, child friendly reproductive health care. These services should be also available to girls within communities who were not part of armed forces and armed groups but where sexual violence was prevalent. Healthcare is more efficient if it is linked to programmes providing psychosocial support.
- the need for accommodation (family reunification is not always advisable or possible);
- education in parenting skills for unmarried mothers;
- education and specific socio-economic activities (more for the purpose of socializing than generating income). These are even more crucial for girls than boys and men.

Finally, girls are not only passive victims. Despite the traumas they suffered, many girls see themselves as resilient, capable, and able to take on responsibilities and develop income generating strategies. This potential must not be overlooked by programmes which apply inappropriate models based on boys' experiences and an attempt to return to a past situation.

Issues for discussion

- Concrete possibilities for separating formal DDR programmes and specific child protection programmes: advantages and disadvantages, modalities, examples, etc.

- Possibilities for « UN integrated » programmes to really take child protection needs into account

- Ways that programmes can be extended and orientated toward other beneficiaries and possibilities for implementing programmes for children affected by conflict in general

- Funding modalities: lessons learned from multi-donors funding experiences, alternatives, possibility of creating multi-donor funds for protection of children affected by conflict

- How to respond to socio-economic needs of children, adolescents, and families

Annex 1: List of 59 participating States to have endorsed the Paris Commitments

Paris Conference:

“Free Children from War”

5th and 6th February 2007

- 1. AFGHANISTAN**
- 2. AUSTRIA**
- 3. BELGIUM**
- 4. BENIN**
- 5. Brazil**
- 6. BULGARIA**
- 7. BURUNDI**
- 8. CAMBODIA**
- 9. CANADA**
- 10. CHAD**
- 11. CHINA**
- 12. COLOMBIA**
- 13. CYPRUS**
- 14. CZECH REPUBLIC**
- 15. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**
- 16. DENMARK**
- 17. ESTONIA**
- 18. FINLAND**
- 19. FRANCE**
- 20. GERMANY**
- 21. GHANA**
- 22. GREECE**
- 23. HAITI**
- 24. HUNGARY**
- 25. INDONESIA**
- 26. IRELAND**
- 27. ITALY**
- 28. IVORY COAST**
- 29. JAPAN**
- 30. LIBERIA**
- 31. LITHUANIA**
- 32. LUXEMBOURG**
- 33. MALI**
- 34. MALTA**
- 35. MONACO**
- 36. NEPAL**
- 37. NETHERLANDS**
- 38. NIGER**
- 39. NORWAY**
- 40. PERU**
- 41. POLAND**

42. **PORTUGAL**
43. **QATAR**
44. **REPUBLIC OF CONGO**
45. **ROMANIA**
46. **RUSSIA**
47. **SIERRA LEONE**
48. **SLOVAKIA**
49. **SLOVENIA**
50. **SOMALIA**
51. **SOUTH AFRICA**
52. **SPAIN**
53. **SRI LANKA**
54. **SUDAN**
55. **SWEDEN**
56. **SWITZERLAND**
57. **TIMOR-LESTE**
58. **UGANDA**
59. **UNITED KINGDOM**