



# **IDDRS 05.30**

4 October 2005

---

## **Children and DDR**

---

Team Leaders:

UNDDA  
UNDP  
UNDPKO  
UNHCR  
UNICEF  
UNIFEM  
UNFPA

**VF SUBSTANTIVE EDIT**

## Executive Summary

This module on children and DDR is based on relevant provisions of international law, field experience and lessons learned by UNICEF over the past 15 years in its programmes for the prevention of recruitment and the demobilisation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict.<sup>1</sup>

There is a growing international consensus that the forced or compulsory recruitment of children – girls and boys under the age of 18, and their use in hostilities by both armed forces and armed groups, is illegal and one of the worst forms of child labour. The recruitment and use of children under 15 is a war crime. This consensus is expressed in a comprehensive set of international legal instruments, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court, and is reinforced by a series of UN Security Council resolutions.

Unlike adults, children cannot legally be recruited; therefore, measures which aim to prevent their recruitment, or which attempt to reintegrate them into their communities, should not be viewed as a routine component of peacemaking but as an attempt to prevent or redress a violation of children's human rights. This means that child DDR is not analogous to that for adults. Rather, it is a specific process with its own imperatives, several of which are fundamentally different from adult demobilization programmes.

Child DDR requires that the demobilization (or 'release') and reintegration of children, especially girls, be pursued at all times, even during a conflict, and that actions to prevent child recruitment should be continuous. When DDR exercises have made the presentation of a weapon for disarmament as a criterion for eligibility for DDR, children, especially girls, have been excluded – whether intentionally or not. Because children are associated with armed groups in a variety of ways, not only as combatants, some may not have access to weapons. These children must still be considered child soldiers, released by the groups that recruited them, and receive reintegration support.

Child DDR has a different scope and timeframe from that for peacekeeping operations and national reconstruction efforts. It must not wait until a mechanism for adult DDR is established. Efforts should be made to ensure that child DDR is not contingent on adult DDR or the conclusion of broader security sector reform (SSR) and power sharing negotiations, because interdependency between child and adult DDR programmes has negative consequences for children associated with armed forces and groups. Children should not find themselves pawns, recruited in order to swell the ranks of armed groups who have over-reported their numbers as a means to influence power sharing agreements. It is also essential to protect child DDR structures and mechanisms from setbacks in SSR reform, including a lack of funding, so that child DDR mechanisms continue to operate even if progress on adult DDR is slow. Equally, because children can be associated with armed forces and groups in a variety of ways, child-specific DDR mechanisms should remain in place after national reintegration of adult soldiers is complete. This will ensure that all children associated with armed forces and groups – not just those who fought as combatants – can benefit from the process.

Peace processes offer an opportunity to highlight the needs of children affected by armed conflict, and their rights should be identified as an explicit priority in peacemaking, peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes both in the peace agreement as well as in DDR plans. The commitment to stop the recruitment of children and to release children from armed forces and groups, with specific attention to girls, should be stated within peace agreements.

Child-specific reintegration shall allow a child to access education, a livelihood, life skills and a meaningful role in society. The socio-economic and psychosocial aspects of reintegration for children in global DDR programming and budgeting are central. Successful reintegration requires long term funding of child protection agencies and programmes to ensure continuous support for education and training for children and essential follow-up/monitoring once they return. For sustainability, and to ensure the whole community can benefit from a child's return and reintegration while avoiding tension, stigmatization or envy when a child is returned to a village with a reintegration package containing material goods that are unavailable to others, it is based in broader community development processes. It is neither possible nor desirable to suggest a scripted intervention, so each programme needs to be context-specific and developed and managed to be sustainable.

## **1. Introduction**

Girls and boys under the age of 18 are involved in most major conflicts in the world today, associated with both government armed forces and non-state armed groups. Children typically represent 10% to 50% of the armed forces' or groups' strength.

Child recruitment into armed forces and groups is illegal in international law. Therefore, child demobilization (or 'release') and reintegration is a human rights issue and is not contingent on any other political negotiation. The mechanisms and structures for the release and reintegration of children should be set up before a formal peace agreement is signed, a peacekeeping mission deployed and an adult DDR structure established. Progress should be made by armed forces and groups on child release before more complex and national processes, such as SSR, are initiated.

Children should not be included in the count of members of any armed force or group at the time of SSR or power-sharing negotiations, and apparent legitimacy should not be conferred to child recruitment through the integration of children into adult DDR processes even though, for budgetary and programmatic reasons, children should be included in the count of persons qualifying for demobilization/release and reintegration assistance.

Sufficient funding for child DDR should be made available to child protection agencies through a funding mechanism that is independent of, and managed separately from, adult demobilization, and specialized child protection agencies should be called upon for the necessary political, technical and operational leadership within the framework of the UN mission or the UN country team.

While DDR programmes in general must include the community to which former combatants return, child-specific programmes must be particularly community-based so that adequate services are provided to communities to enable them to better care for children. Because conflicts affect all children in the countries where they occur, communities may resent any special attention given to children associated with armed forces and groups, especially when cash allowances are given at the time of demobilization. To avoid problems, it is important to ensure that the work of child protection agencies and programmes in communities includes all children, is independent and flexible, does not stigmatize children formally associated with armed forces and groups, and builds and reinforces community-based solutions and capacities.

## **2. Scope**

This module provides policy makers, senior management, operational staff and DDR officers with guidance on the planning and implementation of a child-specific demobilization and reintegration programme for children associated with armed forces and groups in a peacekeeping environment. It covers guiding principles, definitions, the role of child protection agencies and key programming considerations on prevention of (re-)recruitment, release and reintegration in times of continuing conflict, with specific attention to girls.

This module is intended to be applied primarily in a peace keeping environment, i.e. with a peace accord providing the overall framework of operation. It can also be used more generally, as a response to the specific needs of children in post-conflict environments.

## **2. Terms and Definitions**

A list of terms, definitions and abbreviations used in this standard is given in Annex A. A complete glossary of all the terms, definitions and abbreviations used in the IDDRS series of standards is given in IDDRS 1.2.

In the IDDRS series of standards, the words 'shall', 'should' and 'may' are used to indicate the intended degree of compliance. This use is consistent with the language used in the ISO standards and guidelines:

- a) 'shall' is used to indicated requirements, methods or specifications that are to be applied in order to conform to the standard.
- b) 'should' is used to indicate the preferred requirements, methods or specifications.
- c) 'may' is used to indicate a possible method or course of action.

### **Children associated with armed forces and groups**

The definition commonly applied to **children associated with armed forces and groups** in prevention, demobilization and reintegration programmes derives from the Cape Town Principles and Best Practices (1997), in which the term *"child soldier"* refers to:

***Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms.***

In his February 2000 report to the UN Security Council, the Secretary General defined a child soldier *"as any person under the age 18 years of age who forms part of an armed force in any capacity and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members, as well as girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage"*. The CRC specifies that a *child* is every human below the age of 18.

The term *"children associated with armed forces and groups"*, although more cumbersome, is now used to avoid the perception that the only children of concern are combatant boys. It points out that children eligible for release and reintegration programmes are both those associated with armed forces and groups and those who fled armed groups (often considered as deserters and therefore requiring support and protection), children who were abducted, those forcibly married, and those in detention.

Access to demobilization does not depend on a child's level of involvement in armed forces and groups. No distinction is made between combatants and non-combatants for fear of unfair treatment, oversight, or exclusion (mainly of girls). Nevertheless, the child's personal history and functions undertaken in the armed conflict can help determine the kind of support she or he needs in the reintegration phase.

### **Prevention of recruitment, demobilization and reintegration**

Child-focused agencies use the term *prevention of recruitment, demobilization and reintegration* (PDR) rather than DDR when referring to child-centered processes.

### **Recruitment**

Recruitment includes compulsory, forced and voluntary recruitment or captivity into any kind of labour in any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group.

### **Demobilization, release, exit from an armed force or group**

The term “demobilization” refers to ending a child’s association with armed forces or groups. The terms “release” or “exit from an armed force or group” and “children coming or exiting from armed forces and groups” rather than “demobilized children” is preferred.

Child demobilisation/release is very brief and entails removing a child from a military or armed group as swiftly as possible. This action may require official documentation (e.g. issuing a demobilization card or official registration in a database for ex-combatants) to confirm that the child has no military status, although formal documentation must be carefully used so that it does not stigmatise an already vulnerable child.

### **Reintegration**

The provision of reintegration support is a right enshrined in article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, “*State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote [...] social reintegration of a child victim of [...] armed conflicts*”. Child-centred reintegration is multi-layered and focuses on family reunification, mobilizing and enabling care systems in the community, medical screening and health care including reproductive health services, schooling and/or vocational training, psychosocial support, social, cultural and economic support. Socio-economic reintegration is often underestimated in DDR programmes but should be included in all stages of programming and budgeting, and partner organisations should be involved at the onset of the reintegration process to establish strong collaboration structures.

### **Normative and legal framework**

The key elements of the normative framework relevant to children in armed conflict are summarized in this section. A complete list of relevant instruments is provided in the annex.

The recruitment and use of children in armed conflict is governed by binding international and regional legal instruments:

- **The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000):** prohibits forced recruitment under 18 yrs for signatory states. On May 25, **2000**, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the Optional Protocol (OP) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The OP entered into force on 12 February **2002**. For States Parties, the Protocol raises the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities from 15 to 18 years. The Optional Protocol prohibits conscription or forced recruitment and use by governments below the age of 18, and calls on States to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment above 15. It prohibits all recruitment – voluntary, forced or compulsory – of children under 18 by armed groups. Under Article 6, State Parties “shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons within their jurisdiction who are recruited or used in hostilities contrary to the Protocol are demobilized. States Parties shall accord such persons all appropriate assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and their social reintegration”.
- **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)** forbids the recruitment and direct participation in combat (including internal conflicts) of any person under the age of 18 (article 22).
- **ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999):** States Parties shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which includes the forced or compulsory recruitment of people under the age of 18 for use in armed conflict.
- **The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998):** prohibits forced recruitment under 18 yrs and makes it a war crime, subject to individual criminal

prosecution, to conscript or enlist children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups or use them to participate actively in hostilities, in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989):** prohibits all recruitment under 15 years.
- **The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols of 1977:** prohibit all recruitment under 15 years. The Additional Protocols I (Articles 77(2) and 77(3)) and II (Article 4-3 c) to the Geneva Conventions (1947) call for the protection of children in armed conflict, forbid the recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 in conflict, and provide special treatment for children in detention.
- **Special Court in Sierra Leone (1996):** recruitment below 15 years is considered a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

#### **Non-binding standards:**

- The United Nations Security Council has adopted five resolutions on children in armed conflict, with precise provisions about children associated with armed forces and groups, in particular resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004).
- SCR1325 emphasises the inclusion of girls in all aspects of DDR, SSR and other peacebuilding.
- The Cape Town Principles and Best Practices, April 1997.
- UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (1995)
- UN Rules of the Protection of Juveniles deprived of their Liberty (1990)

### **3. Background**

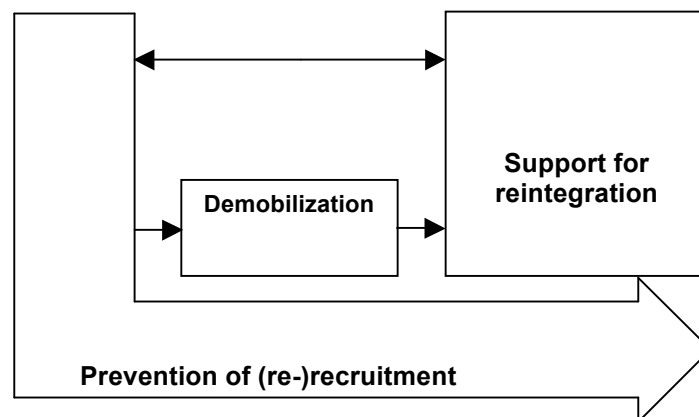
Armed forces and groups recruit children for many reasons. When conflicts are protracted, there may be fewer voluntary adult combatants. Children may be unprotected because there may be no national legislation related to the use of children as soldiers, or it may not be implemented or understood. Children may be easy to hide in armed groups or forces because the birth registration system may be of poor quality or identity documents may not be available. Both girls and boys can be associated with armed forces and groups in different ways: they can be present in command posts, as part-time informers, cooks and porters or formal cadres. Girls, who can make up a significant proportion of recruits, are vulnerable to recruitment because of gender expectations that they can do any kind of useful work. They perform a variety of functions including forced sex work, although they are rarely acknowledged and even less often taken into consideration in demobilization and reintegration processes. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons can be easily handled by children, and children can be easily manipulated to use weapons, so armed groups commonly carry out a systematic strategy of recruitment and training to ensure that children become completely dependent on them.

Recruitment – whether into governmental forces or other armed groups – can take different forms: the abduction of children from schools, public markets and streets; parental or community pressure; media manipulation; coercion; poverty; lack of alternative opportunities. Very often, a child's need for security leads him or her to join an armed group to find protection. Children might also wish to be associated with armed forces or groups because of political or ideological motivations; cultural,

social and economic exclusion; family, community or peer pressure; idleness; lack of educational opportunities; a lack of peaceful and safe avenues to participate in civic life; the allure of powerful arms; the need for protection, care and belonging; the wish to escape a difficult environment; or a desire for justice or revenge.

Regardless of the kind and level of involvement of children in armed forces and groups, their recruitment has multiple consequences, both in the short and long term, for them, their families and their communities. Children in armed forces and groups are exposed to extreme physical and emotional risks, are often neglected, can be abused and mistreated, can witness or become involved in killings, rapes, etc. The environment in which they operate, the living conditions to which they are subjected, and the training they endure all seriously hinder their development.

Prevention of recruitment, demobilization and reintegration (PDR) of children is an iterative and ongoing process, and reintegration programmes should offer viable alternatives to military life for all war-affected children. The aim of PDR programmes for children associated with armed forces and groups is to ensure their effective and sustainable reintegration. The diagram below shows that prevention is an ongoing activity supported by reintegration, demobilization is a tool to achieve reintegration, and reintegration aims to prevent re-recruitment.



## 4. Guiding Principles

**4.1. Guiding Principles From the Convention on the Rights of the Child** should be considered at all stages, from situation analysis to conception, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

- **Child's right to life, survival and development:** The right to life, survival and development is not limited to physical integrity but includes the need to ensure full and harmonious development, including at the spiritual, moral and social levels, where education plays a key role.
- **Non-discrimination:** States must ensure respect for the rights of all children within their jurisdiction – including non-national children – regardless of race, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, opinions, disability or any other status of the child, the child's parents or legal guardians.
- **Child Participation:** Children should be allowed to express their opinions freely, and those opinions should be "given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child". Children should be consulted at all stages of the demobilization and reintegration process, and actions that affect them should be in their **best interests** and reflect their needs and



concerns. In particular, children should participate in making decisions with regard to family reunification, vocational and educational opportunities.

- **Child's best interests:** Actions that affect the child should be based on an assessment of whether those actions are in the child's best interests. Where possible and appropriate, a child should participate in determining what is in her/his best interests.

#### **4.2. Programming**

- **Technical and operational leadership by specialized child protection agencies:** Prevention, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children – girls and boys – require a specialized approach and child protection agencies shall provide the required technical and operational leadership in decision-making and programme implementation.
- **Ensure inclusive programming for all war-affected children:** Conflicts harm all children, whether they have been recruited or not. An inclusive approach that provides support to all war-affected children shall be adopted to promote reintegration, avoid stigmatization or a sense that children formerly associated with armed forces and groups are privileged, and prevent further recruitment.
- **Ensure age-appropriate interventions** for each age group. Wherever possible, children should be provided an opportunity to access formal education. Where this is not possible, appropriate income-generating opportunities will have to be developed, while non-formal and informal learning opportunities may also be offered.
- **Strengthen existing local capacities:** Programmes aimed at children associated with armed forces or groups require a longer implementation period than average during a peacekeeping operation. Their long-term success depends on the capacities of local actors and communities, which can be strengthened by, for instance, involving them in the prevention of child recruitment. Training and monitoring should be offered by field agencies along with advocacy at various levels of national structures.
- **Participatory and de-centralised consultation** should be promoted so that common strategies can be devised and programmes can be more responsive to local realities. National frameworks, including guiding principles, norms and procedures specific to the local and regional contexts, should be established. Clear roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, including engagement and exit strategies, should be agreed upon by all actors.
- **Government should be a key partner/owner** in the official overall DDR process in order to ensure long-term sustainability. The level of responsibility and national ownership will depend on the context and the terms of the peace accord. PDR requires that basic social services be functional, efficient and sustainable. Appropriate Ministries, such as Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, Families, Women, Labour etc., as well as any DDR Commission that is set up, need to be involved in the planning and design of PDR programmes.
- **Systems of coordination and information-sharing** must be established and continuously implemented, so that all concerned parties can act complementarily, particularly in the case of contingency and security planning.
- All personnel (civil and military) involved in the operational aspects of DDR programmes should be **trained in all matters relating to children**. Training should increase awareness of children's rights and protection, monitor violations and uphold codes of conduct.<sup>2</sup> Given the high turnover of peacekeeping staff, training should be ongoing and should be provided as a

matter of course to incoming personnel. Child Protection Advisers play a key role in ensuring this training is delivered effectively within a peacekeeping mission.

- When creating databases, staff should gather and process information regarding children while **observing ethical rules and maintaining strict confidentiality**, to protect the security of the children and their relatives. Government armies frequently seek military information on armed opposition groups through demobilized children. This is illegal, places children in danger and compromises demobilization. A clear commitment shall be obtained from governments that military information will not be sought from children under any circumstances.
- **Protective rules have to be established when collecting testimonies from children** through post-conflict justice mechanisms, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or the International Criminal Court.<sup>3</sup> There is a need to protect the identity of child witnesses, not to require children to re-live traumatic experiences as they testify, and to be clear that their testimony may or may not succeed so that they have realistic expectations.
- The media should respect **rules governing reporting on and interviewing children**. Particular attention should be paid to sensitizing the media on the consequences of discussing sensitive issues that could have implications for the reintegration of children, for instance, HIV prevalence rates (real or perceived) among demobilized children.
- **The reintegration of children is a long-term process.** Demobilization and reintegration programmes for children should be expected to extend over a period of 5 years or more, and require appropriate funding early on in the process in order to build capacity, especially in the community to which a child returns. Immediate start-up financial support should be made available to child protection agencies, and independent and flexible mechanisms are required to allow separate child demobilization and reintegration activities where needed.

#### **4.3. Situation analysis**

A detailed situation analysis of the country should include: the root causes of the conflict; the ideology, command structure/management/hierarchy of the armed group or force; the circumstances, patterns, causes, conditions and extent of child recruitment; consequences for children's well-being; children's living conditions and their emotional and behavioural consequences; the attitudes of families and communities regarding the conflict and their resilience and capacities, armed groups and forces and children's participation; and finally individual children and their expectations (see Annex 2).

Emphasis is often placed on the need to estimate the numbers of children in armed forces and groups in order to plan actions. While this is important, policy makers and planners should also recognise that it is always difficult to obtain accurate figures. Inaccurate estimates during planning should not prevent programme implementation. Be aware that the act of recording children's and communities' wishes can in itself raise expectations which can only be managed by being honest about what services or assistance may or may not ultimately be provided.

#### **4.4. Planning**

Planning includes but is not limited to carrying out the situation analysis, developing programme implementation and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, specifying roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, assuring funding sustainability and developing strategies of engagement and exit. The best interests of the child should guide planning assumptions and decisions.

Outside of an official national DDR exercise, demobilization may take place spontaneously in an unplanned fashion depending on opportunities arising from the geographical, political, security or

even health conditions of armed forces and groups. Contingency plans should be established and sites and equipment for the reception of released children pre-located, where feasible. Agencies should ensure that community reconstruction, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes are in place throughout the conflict area, and encourage the population to identify and address the needs of displaced children and those who spontaneously separate from an armed force or group to return directly to their communities or seek refuge elsewhere. Flexible planning is needed to allow children to receive reintegration support in places where they spontaneously look for help – such as church organisations, health centres and the like. If a child has successfully found help by him or herself, it may be in the best interests of the child to remain outside a formal DDR programme rather than be uprooted when formal reintegration occurs. In such cases, community-based approaches to reintegration should help ensure that the child continues to receive adequate care and assistance.

#### **4.5. Communication and Awareness Raising**

Awareness raising and communication is essential at all stages and levels to manage expectations and create clear lines of communication between all actors involved in DDR. This involves exchanging and listening to opinions, not misleading or manipulating opinion for political advantage. Be wary of members of armed forces and groups and DDR actors making unfounded promises to children. Communication programmes must be active and constantly ready to respond to changing events, perceptions or declarations, so that the process can continue in the best possible conditions. Strategies should include some room for exchanging questions, and involve credible and legitimate local actors (community leaders, etc.).

Awareness raising should target the following groups with specific information:

- **Children** should receive comprehensible information about their rights and the DDR process so they become positively engaged in the process.
- Members of armed forces and groups and actors in the demobilization exercise must not **make unfounded promises** to children regarding DDR
- **Armed forces and groups** should receive information on the rule of law and child protection, including the prohibition of child recruitment and its harmful consequences so that they release all boys and girls without threatening them or making unrealistic promises, and refrain from trying to re-recruit them.
- **Families, communities and civil society in general** should receive information concerning children's rights and protection, the demobilization process, the living conditions of children associated with armed forces and groups, and the difficulties they face, so that they can play a protective and supportive role in their reintegration. Community sensitisation activities help to ensure that expectations are adjusted in advance of a former child soldier's return.
- **DDR Staff (national and international)** should be aware of children, especially girls, in armed groups and forces, understand what steps to take to obtain their immediate release and know how to assist them after release.

#### **4.6 Advocacy at peace negotiations**

Parties to a conflict rarely acknowledge the presence of children in their ranks, so children are often excluded from the benefits linked to DDR. Despite declarations of intent, the issue of children is often neglected during negotiations to set up a general DDR programme.

Advocacy aims to keep the issue of child soldiers on the agenda and to ensure that the roles played by girls and boys in conflict situations are identified and acknowledged from the moment peace negotiations start. Children's rights and protection should be explicitly mentioned during the enforcement of peace accords, in peacekeeping and in the processes of conflict resolution, both in

peace agreements and in DDR programmes. All those involved should support advocacy to promote children's issues in peace agreements and negotiations. Advocacy should take place at all levels, through formal and informal dialogues, the involvement of United Nations agencies, foreign missions, donors and representatives of parties; and it should support civil society actions if possible.

The unconditional release of all girls and boys associated with armed forces and groups should be stated in peace agreements. The willingness of parties to a conflict to release children early and to stop further child recruitment should be a measure of the seriousness of their engagement in peace negotiations.

#### **4.7 Access of children to DDR programmes**

Children, especially girls, are not always considered as full members of an armed force or group; nor are DDR staff properly trained to identify them and cater for their needs. As a result, they lose access to essential services. Sometimes children themselves do not wish to be identified as coming from an armed force or group in order to avoid discrimination. Some may not know they have the right to benefit from any kind of support (for example, children who flee and hide, and consider themselves deserters). The challenge is to encourage girls and boys to benefit from DDR programmes while avoiding any detrimental effects.

To achieve this, authorities and child protection agencies should work with organisations involved in monitoring children's recruitment so they understand recruitment patterns and the roles played by children and gain direct and free access to them. This is necessary to allow authorities and agencies to collect information concerning the child's release and to implement child-specific programmes. These authorities can raise awareness among children, the military and other DDR actors about the services available and how to access them, and establish verification procedures for the identification of boys and girls associated with armed forces and groups.

#### **4.8 Criminal responsibility**

Former child soldiers are victims of criminal policies for which adults are responsible. Any judicial proceedings for children should take place in the context of juvenile and restorative justice in order to assist physical, psychological and social recovery, in line with article 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Mitigating circumstances should be acknowledged, and children shall not be prosecuted or detained for military misdemeanours (such as desertion, insubordination, etc.) or for criminal acts committed while associated with armed forces or groups. The detention of a child shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time (art.37 of the CRC).

While some processes of determining accountability serve the best interests of a child perpetrator, international child rights and juvenile justice standards require that alternatives to judicial proceedings should be applied, providing that human rights and legal safeguards are fully respected (article 40(3b), CRC; rule 11, Beijing Rules). For example, the concept of restorative justice – achieved through finding alternatives to criminal courts – is aimed at the offender understanding and taking responsibility for his or her actions and also involves achieving reconciliation between the offender, the victim and the wider community through reparations.

### **5. Girls**

Girls are recruited and abducted by armed groups and forces to perform specific functions, but they can also take on the same responsibilities as boys. Gender inequality renders girls vulnerable to abduction or forced recruitment, as well as sexualised violence within armed groups and forces. Indeed, state sanctioned violence, including sexual violence by state forces, the absence of educational opportunities, mistreatment or exploitation in the family, a lack of opportunities to attend

school, earn a livelihood, or express themselves, negligence, and a need for improved security and empowerment are all factors that make girls vulnerable to recruitment. Thus, prevention strategies for girls need to take into account that girls are boys' vulnerability, while similar, is not exactly the same.

Particular attention should be given to respecting girls' rights and ensuring their access to basic services in order to build and sustain a 'protective environment', as follows:

- Ensuring government commitment to girls' rights and building capacity to uphold those rights;
- Legislation and enforcement, especially to promote and protect gender equality for children as well as adults;
- Protecting children's rights, especially the right of girls to bodily integrity, education and health care and providing essential services to support these rights;
- Ensuring participatory discussion with girls about programmes designed for their reintegration, as called for in Security Council Resolution 1325,
- Providing children with life skills, knowledge and participation, especially to counter gender-based violence;
- Building the capacity of families and communities to take care of and encourage girls;
- Monitoring, reporting and overseeing all programmes for girls, including monitoring staff (national and international) charged with caring for girls and taking swift action to punish abusers.

### **5.1 Identification and access to demobilization processes**

Guaranteeing girls' access to PDR programmes is a significant challenge. Like women, girls are generally "invisible" and neglected, both by members of armed forces and groups and by DDR planners and programme staff. DDR planners have been unaware of the presence and roles of girls associated with fighting forces, are ill-informed of appropriate responses to their needs, and thus design programs that inadvertently prevent their entrance and compromise their long-term recovery. At the same time, members of armed forces and groups are increasingly aware of the fact that the use and recruitment of children is a violation of international law and try to hide all children associated with their fighting forces and groups. Members of armed forces or groups are often reluctant to give up their girl captives who may be serving them as forced wives and domestic servants. One of the biggest security threats at cantonment sites is fights between family members who have come to rescue captured girls and commanders who claim these children as wives: family members are often forced to retreat because of the threat of violence against them. Another significant problem is that girls often do not know about, or do not wish to come forward for DDR, because of shame or fear of being punished. Thus, PDR programs for girls must be designed to minimize shame and stigma and maximize security.

The presence of girls in armed forces and groups should always be presumed, even if they are not visible. There should be no distinction made between combatants and non-combatants when eligibility criteria are determined, as these definitions are blurred in forces and groups where children, and girls in particular, perform numerous combat, combat support, and non-combat roles that are essential to the functioning of the fighting force. To make DDR programmes more gender-sensitive, women's groups should be involved in raising awareness about the programs, female staff should be recruited, all staff should be trained to deal with girls and know how to assist girl and young mothers in particular, and respected personalities (both men and women) should be involved in mediation to release girls, in particular, from armed groups and forces. Training on gender equality should be provided to staff and others working with demobilised girls and boys.

Mechanisms should be developed to reach out to girls and inform them about the benefits they might be entitled to through PDR, and girls should be able to access PDR programmes and

benefits through means other than cantonment sites, for example, through institutions they are already using and avenues that target their needs such as health care facilities, particularly those regarding reproductive health, religious centres, and organizations that assist survivors of sexual violence. Finally, specific attention needs to be paid to girls' health and psychological needs as they are far likelier than boys to have been subjected to sexualised violence, sometimes over long periods of time.

## **5.2 Cantonment sites and interim facilities**

In cantonment sites, girls are particularly vulnerable because most sites are designed to attract and house large numbers of adult male combatants. The construction of such sites tends to facilitate the exploitation and abuse of women and girls e.g., lack of adequate protection measures, overcrowded conditions, poor lighting, lack of safe spaces and privacy for girls, the expectation that they will cook, which requires them to fetch wood and water from outside the camp boundaries, and so on. Moreover, girl and young mothers struggle to adequately take care of their children in cantonment sites, as most sites make no provisions for infants or young children (see also [5.10 Gender](#) and [5.20 Youth](#)).

To minimise these problems, the time spent by girls in cantonment sites should be as short as possible (days not weeks) and the transfer of girls and mothers with young children to interim care centres should occur immediately. Women and girls must be represented on the management committees of cantonment sites. Separate accommodation must be provided for females, with specific health services, including reproductive health services, separate washing and toilet facilities, adapted hygiene kits, and clean birthing kits. Since a number of the girls are likely to be mothers, sites should also be designed to provide adequate nutrition and health care for infants and young children, with child care assistance provided for mothers unable to care for their children. Particular attention should be given to the safety and protection of girls in cantonment sites through measures such as regulated access of male former combatants to the sites, proper lighting and regular surveillance and patrolling by security forces in which women are a majority. Girls should know they have the right not to be abused and that they have the right and ability, through adapted and efficient reporting and complaints mechanisms, to report abuse.

Abuse, particularly sexual abuse, and exploitation by adults is a possible threat at all stages of the DDR process, including in cantonment sites and interim care centres, but remains hidden because girls are reluctant or afraid of reporting it. When girls do report abuse or exploitation by staff or adult caregivers, they should not be stigmatised or made to feel “disloyal” in any way, and their complaints must be acted on immediately through pre-determined mechanisms to protect them from such exploitation and to punish the offenders to the fullest extent possible. Mechanisms should be established to prevent offenders from working again with girls (and boys) in similar situations.

In the transit facilities and during the follow up in their community of return, if girls express a desire for such a service, they should be given space and time to share their emotions and reflect on their experiences to health workers trained in psychotherapeutic assistance. In general, and particularly in the transit facilities, children should see equal relationships between men and women, based on dignity and respect: this modelling is important for children to adapt to a peace-time environment. In the transit facilities, night accommodation for girls should continue to be separate from that of boys, and girls' facilities should still be protected with adequate lighting near all toilet and shower facilities. Appropriate recreational activities should be provided so that girls and boys are not idle.

If children are placed with caregivers other than relatives during the transition period, particular attention should be paid to the safety and protection of girls through strict selection of caregivers, close follow up and monitoring, and the availability of secure and confidential reporting mechanisms for those who feel unsafe.

### **5.3 Reintegration support**

Reintegration is the most difficult phase of any DDR process. Girls face challenges regarding acceptance back into their families and communities, with girl mothers and their children experiencing the highest levels of rejection and abuse upon return. Girls have complex relationships with men within the fighting forces, including their former captors, during reintegration phases that need to be dealt with in sensitive ways to ensure the girls' rights are upheld and that they remain secure. Many girls stress a desire to return to their education or receive training to be economically self sufficient.

In some instances, girls associated with fighting forces may have had the same responsibilities as boys (e.g., taking part in decision-making, having subordinates, experiencing some autonomy, sometimes learning a trade) when they were associated with an armed group or force. If so, the reintegration environment may be disappointing and constricting as it may not offer them as much autonomy and the same right to self-expression. Girls may feel dissatisfied with the traditional expectations of their community of return.

To assist them concretely and build their resilience, the reintegration solutions proposed to girls should be decided with their full participation and be shaped by their future desires and, if applicable, build on any skills they developed during their time in the armed force or group. Throughout, there should be a focus on enabling girls to undertake tasks requiring decision-making and autonomy, develop self-esteem and learn to take decisions with confidence. Girls need to be shown respect and given responsibilities and tasks valued by the community, and should be provided with education and professional training activities adapted to their situation and appropriate to the local economy. Relationships between girls and older women in the community should be fostered if this is of help to the girl.

Where appropriate, girls should be encouraged to learn non-traditional skills: but this may mean that reintegration opportunities in rural settings are too limiting, offering insufficient space for growth and adaptation to civilian life. If so, alternative solutions for reintegration in urban settings should be developed.

### **5.4 Violence, sexual abuse and exploitation**

Sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian crises is an endemic problem and violates not only the physical integrity and security of individuals but also their dignity and self-worth. Gender-specific forms of violence result from unequal power relationships which are often exacerbated in times of widespread and systematic violence and mass displacement which leads to the breakdown of traditional family and social structures and values, and the weakening or loss of legal and governance systems. The economic and social inequalities confronting women and children increase their risk of exploitation by those in positions of power, particularly in state and non-state armed groups and forces where interpersonal relationships are characterised by violence, dominance and a lack of discipline.

As soon as possible after their release from an armed group or force, and then for as long as necessary, girls who survived sexual violence, abuse and exploitation should receive medical and psychosocial care. This care shall constitute a long-term commitment to the welfare of the child, including girls who are HIV positive or suffering from full-blown AIDS. Confidential services should be offered to survivors by staff trained to protect their dignity and security.

Sexual and physical abuse of girls in fighting forces and groups is widespread. Cantonment sites and interim care centres should, without exception, provide medical health screening, including sexual health screening, to all girls, and provide necessary treatments. Girls should be assisted by staff trained to deal with children who may be unable or unwilling to describe their symptoms.

Whether they have been abused or not, social practices and cultural beliefs about the sexual purity of females mean that girls are much more likely than boys to be stigmatized when they leave an armed force or group. Caregivers in the environment to which they are returning should be sensitized so they can actively work to counter and reduce this stigma, and in some cases, communities should not even be told that girls were associated with an armed group or force, provided the girls themselves know where to go if they need help.

All UN staff, including peacekeeping forces, shall be aware of and are required to abide by the Secretary-General's Bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. All staff should receive training on the six core principles of the code of conduct developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Humanitarian Crises. These principles include both a prohibition against any form of sexual activity with children, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence. UN Staff are also prohibited from exchanging money, employment, goods, or services for sex.

### **5.5 Girl mothers and their children**

Girl mothers and their children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and should be cared for with particular attention paid to the protection of the children. On release, children of girls associated with armed forces and groups should be registered, where birth registration is available, to facilitate their access to basic services.

After return to civilian life, even when families are ready to accept the return of girls they may be reluctant to accept their children who may have been born of rape or may reject them because their fathers are unknown or from the opposing forces. A warm reception is the best guarantee that a girl will remain with her family, so families and communities should be sensitized about the vulnerabilities of girl mothers and their children and encouraged and assisted to protect and support them. Particular support should be offered to families to protect girls and their children from being re-abducted into marriages that have not been recognised through customary and national law.

If, however, sensitisation and mediation do not succeed, girls may choose to leave their family and migrate to urban settings where they are less likely to be stigmatized and may have greater access to organizations offering support. Girl mothers prioritize access to education for themselves and their children, and request the means to have a livelihood that enables them to support themselves and their children. They also prioritize and need reliable access to community health services and psychosocial support. To prevent cycles of violence girl mothers should be enabled to learning positive parenting skills so their children grow up in a nurturing household free of violence ([also see 5.10 on Women and Gender in DDR and Youth 5.20](#)).

## **6. Prevention of recruitment and re-recruitment of children**

Prevention of recruitment should be ongoing throughout a conflict and programmes should be based on an analysis of the dynamics of recruitment and its underlying causes and include an advocacy strategy that targets all levels of governance. Prevention against (re)recruitment of children can start at any time, and should continue well beyond adult DDR. Although challenging, it is possible to carry out prevention activities during an ongoing conflict.

### **6.1 Documentation and identification of risks of recruitment**

Many of the defining features of emergencies create favourable conditions for recruitment: insecurity, displacement, breakdown in family and social structures, family separations, erosion of traditional value systems, a culture of violence, weak governance, absence of accountability, lack of



access to basic social services, etc. Some children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment because of inadequate protection, such as children living in conflict zones, child refugees or those who have been internally displaced, unaccompanied children, orphans or those separated from their families, and children with very young parents. Careful analysis of the situation, attention to children most at risk, and developing an understanding of the various risk factors are essential preventative measures; and while preventive activities are complex to develop, they are effective in the long term.

Girls and boys are at greater risk of being recruited in certain locations, such as zones of intense conflict, areas frequently crossed by troops, public places with concentrations of children such as markets, schools, refugee camps or camps for internally displaced persons, places where children go to fetch wood or water. All necessary measures need to be taken to avoid separation of children from their families, particularly whenever populations are in transit to displacement camps, and to support families and communities to prevent the displacement of children.

## **6.2 Prevention of recruitment through the creation of a protective environment**

Certain forms of recruitment are used more intensely and in a more targeted fashion, according to geographical areas and political, social, economic and cultural realities. Understanding this allows for the development of activities to help create a vigilant environment that protects all children from recruitment and use in armed conflict. Supporting families and/or establishing community-based child protection networks for the care and protection of children within communities is an effective preventive measure.

Child recruitment is not always a sudden occurrence, but can be a gradual phenomenon progressing from initial contact into formal association. Children may start with occasional visits to the camps of armed forces or groups to look for food, polish shoes or carry out other tasks. Progressively, they are given more substantial responsibilities, and may seek shelter and eventually surrender to military life. Preventing this kind of “voluntary” recruitment presents a specific challenge, so action should be taken to avoid all contact and all forms of association with an armed force or group, even if it appears harmless.

## **6.3 Sensitising combatants, ex-combatants and commanders**

Members of armed forces or groups may express regret for recruiting children, often arguing that they were unfamiliar with legal norms and unaware of the adverse impacts on child development. However, awareness that child recruitment is illegal may also lead them to take active measures to hide children, especially girls. Regardless of the original circumstances of recruitment (voluntary or forced), or any perceptions about the strategic value of children to an armed force or group, adult members should be made aware of, and responsible for preventing the negative effects of militarization on children. Combatants, ex-combatants and their commanders should be sensitized and informed, whether during the time they spend in demobilization sites or before their integration into new security forces, of children's rights and protection measures, and prosecutions for violations. The sensitisation and training of adults in armed groups and forces removes a potential alibi that the armed forces may use to justify recruitment and makes the environment safer for children.

## **6.4 Community-level advocacy**

Communities and the family can prevent a child's association with armed forces and groups. Protecting communities and working with them to identify how to protect children, to understand why children might seek out this association, explaining the developmental effects of association with armed forces and groups, and assisting with the development and establishment of community-based child protection networks will all help prevent recruitment.

## **6.5 National-level advocacy against recruitment**

Advocacy that targets national decision-makers by raising awareness of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict can lead to legislative change which promotes the ratification and implementation of international legal instruments on child protection or reinforces them, supports the adaptation of laws related to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and ends impunity for the recruitment and/or use of children, while implementing sanctions against those who continue to do so.

## **6.6 Security Sector Reform (SSR)**

If a national security sector reform programme is undertaken after DDR, the composition of new security forces is frequently negotiated according to the numbers of combatants in each faction. Children are commonly included in these figures. Negotiations on security sector reform and force reduction must be contingent on releasing all children and ensuring that they are not counted, because the presence of children is illegal and including them may encourage more recruitment of children in the period preceding negotiations to inflate numbers for political purposes.

The establishment or strengthening of child protection services and legal and police support services for children should receive specific focus in security sector reform processes.

## **6.7 Monitoring and reporting on use and recruitment of children**

Paragraph 3 of Security council resolution 1612 (2005) requests the secretary general to establish a monitoring and reporting system for children affected by armed conflict. The new mechanism requires both governments and armed groups to use time-bound plans of action to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers and requires the UN system to monitor and report on grave violations against children, including the killing or maiming of children; recruitment or use of child soldiers; attacks against schools or hospitals; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access. The resolution requires that such a mechanism operates with the participation of, and in cooperation with, national government and relevant United Nations and civil society actors. The monitoring mechanism will be reviewed in July 2006 and a report of the Secretary General will be submitted to the Security Council in November 2006. Application of the monitoring mechanism will begin with parties in situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to Secretary General's Report (S/2005/72) that are on the agenda of the Security Council: parties in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, and then, in close consultation with countries concerned, will apply to parties in other situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to Secretary-General's report (S/2005/72): Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.

The resolution also established a Council working group (paragraph 8) to which the mechanism will report. The working group will review progress in the development and implementation of action plans called for in paragraph 5 (a) of Council Resolution 1539 (2004), which called on the parties concerned to prepare concrete, time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations.

# **7. Disarmament and Demobilization**

Article 6 of the Optional Protocol asserts that "States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons within their jurisdiction recruited or used in hostilities contrary to the present Protocol are demobilized or otherwise released from service". Demobilisation is, however, a transition point during which children face pressure, abuse and uncertainty about the future.

Conflicting information can mislead a child and raise unrealistic expectations, while programme mismanagement can jeopardise his or her progress. A full understanding of the circumstances affecting a child's decision making is necessary – e.g. is a commander of the armed group making unrealistic promises to a child? Is s/he being threatened with punishment if s/he ever talks about revealing his or her experiences?

Agreeing on child-specific demobilization procedures serves two purposes: 1) it avoids further potential abuse and exploitation of children in the face of troop movement, especially for tactical gain; and, 2) it prepares children for separate and specific child-related reintegration programmes.

### **7.1 Disarmament**

Children with weapons should be disarmed, preferably by a military authority rather than a child protection agency, but not be required to demonstrate their capacity to use a weapon. Eligibility should never be based on the submission of a weapon and proof of familiarity with weaponry because not all children have used a weapon or been a combatant while in the armed forces or groups, and children should enter the demobilization and reintegration process irrespective of whether they present themselves at the assembly points with weapons or ammunitions. They should be given the option of receiving a document certifying the surrender of their weapons if there is a procedure requiring them to do so and if this is in their best interest, i.e., if it can protect the child against any doubt over his or her surrender of the weapon, but not if it will be seen as an admission of guilt and participation in violence in an unstable or insecure environment.

### **7.2 Cantonment and Interim Care Centres**

The time spent by children in cantonment sites should be as brief as possible, and every effort should be made to identify and register them and address their immediate needs rapidly. Where possible, children should be identified before arrival so that the documentation process (identification, verification, registration, medical needs) and other procedures that apply to them in the reception and care phases last no longer than 48 hours, after which they should be transferred to an interim care site or to another location under civilian control.

Admission lists of children that are submitted by commanders should be treated warily and supported by a screening system that is established prior to individual verification. Children should be separated physically from adult soldiers and a security system should be established to prevent adult access to them. Girl mothers should, however, not be separated from their children. In situations of forced marriage, girls and young women should remain secure and separated from their partner to give them time both to be reunited with family members and to think about whether or not to rejoin him. Violent protests from men separated from their “wives” should be anticipated and planned for. Assembly areas and cantonment sites for girls should be sufficiently far from conflict zones to ensure security for children and prevent re-recruitment. Activities aimed at children should be carried out by trained child protection staff.

Interim care centres (ICCs) are not necessary in all DDR situations, especially when a placement there delays family and community reunification. However, they can be used when necessary as they provide a secure space to help children sever their military links, buy time for family tracing and verification and allow for the provision medical support.

ICCs should be run along the same lines as cantonment sites, with the same rules of staffing, care and security in place and an emphasis on removing children to their families or alternative care solutions as quickly as possible. Only children under 18 should be accommodated in ICCs and they should be grouped according to age (unless they are girl mothers). Tracing, verification, reunification and monitoring should be undertaken at ICCs to facilitate the return of children to their communities (including community outreach). Health check-ups and specialised health services should be provided, e.g. reproductive health and antenatal services, diagnosis of STDs, voluntary

and confidential HIV testing and counselling, and nutritional deficiencies and war-related injuries should receive treatment. Children should receive counselling, including help to overcome trauma, develop self-esteem and gain life skills, learn about reintegration and livelihood opportunities and receive peace education and non-violent conflict resolution to help them regain a sense of the social norms and routines of civilian life. While age and gender appropriate sports, cultural and recreational activities should be provided to keep children occupied and help them build trust, there should be no formal education or training activities apart from assessments of literacy.

#### **Advantages and disadvantages of ICCs:**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a stable and protected interim environment</li> <li>• Allows for medical treatment and identification of other specific needs</li> <li>• Provides first steps in breaking ties to military hierarchy</li> <li>• Provides time for family tracing, verification, and community sensitisation and preparation</li> <li>• Allows for in-depth reintegration planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance channelled to ICCs reduces assistance available to families &amp; communities</li> <li>• Impact on the child (positive or negative) has not been definitively determined</li> <li>• May provide a disincentive for a family to assume responsibility for a child</li> <li>• May unnecessarily delay family or community reunification and reintegration</li> <li>• Temptation to provide longer term support, delaying reintegration</li> </ul>

### **7.3 Transition from military to civilian life**

Transition may be challenging for children, because in spite of the difficulties they encountered, they may have found a defined role, responsibility, purpose and power in an armed force or group. For children who have been in an armed force or group for many years, it may at first seem impossible to conceive of a new life; this is particularly true of younger children or groups in which indoctrination is relentless.

Agencies must coordinate to give priority to physically removing children from contact with adult combatants, and a swift, distinct and even symbolic break with the military, with the removal of military clothing, must underpin the separation. Providing civilian documentation such as identity papers is not only symbolic but may in some circumstances help the child reintegrate more easily. Children, especially girls, need immediate reassurance that there are fair and realistic alternatives to military life and should receive comprehensible information about the programmes, benefits and entitlements and the different steps of the DDR process.

Programmes aimed at children associated with armed forces and groups cannot address the needs of adults who have been recruited during their childhood, though it is important to recognize the detrimental effect that recruitment had on their development. Those who are near 18, especially young adults with infants, need special assistance ([see 5.20 on Youth](#)).

### **7.4 Spontaneous demobilization**

An estimated 30% of child combatants never enter formal DDR, either because they are not aware of their rights, choose to go to places that they recognise as providing safety, or are deliberately excluded – as is often the case with girls who are victims of forced marriages, children who have

fled the armed force or group, and those who underwent a demobilization process but did not receive any support for reintegration. Flexible systems should be put in place to link to other reintegration and recovery procedures and activities, so that children who demobilise spontaneously can also benefit from the care and protection services they need.

Children who have already found their way back home to their families and communities should, under no circumstances, be removed to enter cantonment sites and a formal demobilization process. Instead, these children must be reached through alternative community-wide reintegration programmes that are designed both to reduce disruption in the lives of children formerly associated with armed groups and forces and to benefit other war affected children around them.

### **7.5 Cash payments and benefits packages**

Whereas DDR programmes have, in the past, focused mostly on providing immediate transition benefits for adults, child-focused programmes have made a longer-term commitment to reintegration. When adult compensation packages were delivered to children with no differentiation, these longer-term reintegration objectives were compromised, and indeed, children who received adult compensation packages were regarded with hostility and suspicion by the general population, who are themselves in need of assistance, and understood as receiving rewards for the time they spent with an armed force or group. In some cases, the promise of demobilisation payments and benefits has actually acted as an incentive for children to join armed groups and forces, or led to other forms of corruption such as commanders forcing children to share their transitional allowance, taking a child's arms to give to family members so they can claim benefits, or selling arms to children to get them into DDR programmes for a cut of the benefits.

To avoid these scenarios, no monetary payments should be given to children during the demobilization phase. Children, families and communities should be clearly informed about the benefits provided by programmes during the reintegration phase and understand who these are for, and why. All benefits and services should support the development of the child within the community.

### **7.6 Documentation**

Official documentation marking their demobilization may serve to protect children from abuse by authorities or remnant forces. However, staff should ensure that such documents cannot be misconstrued as an admission of guilt or wrong-doing, especially in situations of ongoing conflict or spontaneous demobilization. Official identification documents certifying their effective demobilization can be made available to children when this protects them from re-recruitment and assures them access to reintegration programmes. Civilian documents proving the identity of the child with no mention of their participation in an armed force and group should be made available as soon as possible.

### **7.7 Transport**

Children are particularly vulnerable when their physical protection is no longer secured, primarily during troop movements between camps and cantonment sites or between cantonment sites and transitional structures. Sufficient, appropriate and secured means of transportation should be planned in order to transport them in the shortest time possible and they should be attended by civilian child protection staff. Children should be informed, clearly and in advance, of all their movements.

### **7.8 Data Management**

Information on children's identity, their family, the history of their recruitment and their special needs should be collected as early as possible and safely stored. Standards of information management and common procedures should be developed for all actors regarding data gathering from children, including strict rules of confidentiality to ensure their protection. All children should be informed in their mother tongue about why information is being collected, of its confidentiality, and about what will happen to them at each stage of the process, and give their consent for the use of information they give. Female staff should hold individual interviews with girls away from their superiors, peers or "husbands".

Some information can be sensitive and children who divulge it might be subjected to threats or pressures. Since they are usually fully aware of the threats they face, they may provide misleading information as an attempt at self-defence. Their fears should be identified and measures developed to address them, and staff should pay attention to, and have plans to safeguard children from intimidating elements in the environment.

Information collected from children should be used for the sole purpose of counselling and conducting coordinated family tracing activities initiated by specialised agencies, with the child participating in the research as much as possible. No information should be extracted from them regarding their stay in the ranks of fighting forces or armed groups, and no authority (whether governmental or not) should be allowed to obtain information about military intelligence relating to military movements, location of weapons or any other related information from any child.

### **7.9 Family tracing and reunification**

Family tracing should be initiated at the earliest possible stage and can be carried out concurrently with other activities. Family reunification will follow after mediation and an assessment of the situation to ensure it is swift yet sufficiently thorough not to threaten or cause discomfort to the child. Children can feel apprehensive about returning to their family or community because of acts they might have committed during their time with fighting forces or armed groups, or for any number of other reasons: those who committed acts of violence against their families and/or communities, and girls who have been victims of sexual violence, abuse or exploitation, especially if they have children born from those experiences, are most at risk.

The approach to tracing and family reunification shall be based on the "Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children".<sup>4</sup> Family reunification is not simply an issue of returning a child but requires mediation, including ceremonies of return if desired, to help the family recognise and address problems of alienation, addiction, aggression and resistance to civil forms of authority, and involve them in decisions regarding the child's re-adaptation, education, learning and training. Children need to be assured that their families want them back and accept them as they are. Assistance should not only be of a material or financial nature but also include social support and follow-up.

In some cases, family reunification may not be in the best interests of the child because of difficult security or family conditions that do not afford the child any protection, or when they have lived separately for such a long period of time that the child has founded a new family. It should also be recognised that poor family conditions may have been the reason why the child left and joined the armed forces or groups in the first place. If these conditions remain unchanged, children are at risk of being re-recruited again.

Lone children may become fearful and feel abandoned, so if possible and desirable, children should be reunited with a relative other than a parent, or if necessary, fostered by a member of the extended family or another reliable adult caregiver, to re-establish family ties and social links. Placing a child with a family is a preferred option to institutionalisation or, of course, losing children to street life. However, when children – and girls in particular – are placed outside their own families, they require more follow-up care and monitoring to ensure they are not being subjected to violence, abuse or exploitation.

Institutionalization is harmful for children and this option should be a last resort, although for adolescents who find it difficult to reintegrate into a family other than their own, placement in a small group care situation, a live-in apprenticeship or supervised independent living can provide a solution.

## **8. Reintegration**

**The aim of child-based reintegration is to offer children a tailored and participatory support programme that gives them a viable, long-term alternative to military life.**

Expediency and fairness often dictates that the same support is offered to all children, but programme options should be planned to accommodate differences in age, sex, individual resilience, the capacity of the child to make informed decisions, the length of stay and individual experiences within the armed force or group, and reintegration opportunities in an environment which will inevitably have changed during the child's absence. Transitional or safety net allowances have sometimes been given to children in order to help them start a new life. This practice poses several problems and should never be considered as an alternative for sustainable reintegration programmes.

### **8.1 Psychosocial support and special care**

Many children have serious psychological problems when they re-enter their communities because of the tremendous effort required to adapt to the environment in which they used to live. The problems they experience result from anxiety and uncertainty, idleness, stigmatization, fear of being rejected, poverty, lack of livelihood, etc.

Psychosocial support should be offered instead of individual therapy to help children adopt new patterns of behaviour, improve their self-esteem, develop their capacity to make decisions about the future, and enable them to express emotions should they wish to do so. Children and communities do, with support, have the capacity to cope with the distress caused by war. Psychosocial support activities build upon a child's natural resilience and family and community support mechanisms, and promote coping and positive development despite the adversities experienced. The more children are supported within and through their new reintegration environment, the more reintegration is likely to succeed.

Children are the main actors in their reintegration. They have their own internal resources, or resilience, which helps them cope, confront adversity and recover after stressful experiences. To develop their resilience, children need reliable, positive adult role models outside of the military, a sense of solidarity, of being useful to and responsible for others (e.g., through initiating actions for the benefit of the community) and capable of making important choices (child participation).

Communities also have resilience, and support programmes should take this capacity into account and reinforce it, in particular communities' capacity and desire to protect their children. Psychosocial reintegration is based on a community approach that goes beyond individual therapy by supporting families and communities, schooling or learning opportunities, integration in youth group activities, healing and reconciliation.

Some children may need specific assistance to overcome particularly negative or harmful experiences during their stay with an armed force or group. Injured and disabled children and the terminally ill, in particular, need tailored care adapted to their environment which should include assistance for community-based rehabilitation and long-term care projects.

## **8.2 Inclusive programming for all war-affected children**

While it is obvious that children associated with armed forces and groups are victims of conflict, the needs of other war-affected children should also be identified and addressed, in particular through the restoration of basic social services. An inclusive approach to support war-affected children facilitates their sustainable reintegration, prevents stigmatization and avoids the impression that joining an armed force or group brings rewards. It can take the form of assistance for existing schooling systems or vocational training institutions, health care systems, youth groups, apprenticeships or other livelihood opportunities, etc. Reintegration efforts originally intended for demobilized children, such as accelerated learning opportunities, may be adapted to assist community development more broadly.

## **8.3 The role of communities**

Community acceptance is essential for a child's reintegration, but preconceived ideas and expectations about children coming out of armed forces or groups or the scars of violence committed against families and/or communities could severely undermine community support. To prevent reprisals, communities have to be prepared for returning children through awareness-raising and education which can start with sensitisation of community leaders, strengthening of local child protection networks, peace and reconciliation education, and events aimed at fostering a lasting reintegration of the children.

Cultural, religious, and traditional rituals can play an important role in the protection and reintegration of girls and boys into their communities, such as traditional healing, cleansing and forgiveness rituals, the development of solidarity mechanisms based on tradition and the use of proverbs and sayings in sensitisation and mediation activities. Caution should be exercised to ensure that religious beliefs serve the best interests of the child, especially in areas where religion or cultural values may have played an important role in recruitment.

Reconciliation ceremonies can offer forgiveness for acts committed, allow children to be "cleansed" from the violence they have suffered, restore cultural links and demonstrate children's involvement in civilian life. Such ceremonies increase the commitment of communities toward the children's reintegration process. Children should contribute to the creation of appropriate reintegration mechanisms to enhance their sense of belonging and capacity. However, it is also essential to understand and neutralise community traditions that are physically or mentally harmful to a child.

Particular attention should be paid to the information that circulates among communities about returning boys and girls, so that harmful rumours, for example about real or presumed rates of prevalence of HIV among them, can be effectively countered and a nurturing environment be created to receive children, especially those who are indeed terminally ill.

## **8.4 Education, training and livelihoods**

The higher a child's level of education, the more their reintegration is likely to succeed. It is, therefore, important for children to try to reach (or recover) a level of education, often starting with basic literacy. However, returning to school is often difficult and even impossible not only because of financial reasons but also because of the adjustments both teachers and learners have to make.

After a relatively long stay within armed forces or groups, or because of the difficulties they previously encountered in the school environment, children may not be able to adapt to traditional teaching methods. Appropriate schooling programmes should be developed in liaison with the Ministry of Education and considered equivalent to other official programmes and teachers should receive specific training in order to provide better support to children with learning difficulties. Short-term accelerated learning classes and other remedial schooling programmes for children who have been out of school for prolonged periods can provide catch-up opportunities. However, even with



the assistance of such programmes, some children may not be able to return to the regular school system. In such cases, programmes should be designed to include vocational training activities (skills training and apprenticeship) in conjunction with studies of local economic capacities and the labour market. There should be a wide range of professional training options available to children to help them adapt successfully, but income-generating activities for children should be consistent with legal norms on child labour (minimum age, working conditions, etc.).

It will not be possible to apply the same solution to all children. There are significant differences between children who are 10 or 16, those who have voluntarily or forcibly integrated into an armed force, those who have made decisions and taken responsibilities or who have been slaves, those who have a family waiting for them and those who cannot return. Not all children will require the same level of attention, the same approach, or the same support. Viable solutions need to be developed for each situation. Programme options (formal education, non-formal education, vocational training and income generation) should therefore be planned to accommodate differences in age (e.g. below 12, 12-14 and 14 and above). ([See also 5.20 on Youth](#))

Some children need to start earning a living immediately upon return to their family and community and should be helped to earn an income or receive benefits while they obtain professional training and/or an improved education. For example, the sale of some objects produced in the training phase could allow them to purchase the tools they need for future work. Boys and girls, in particular those of legal working age, should benefit from an adapted version of socio-economic support options for demobilized adults. Families can be offered economic support through income-generating activities which can be provided in such a way that financial incentives are not the primary attraction for caring for children.

To make the transition from military to civilian life, children also need to be trained about their political rights and eventually, responsibilities. They need to understand good citizenship, communication and teamwork, non-violent conflict resolution methods, etc. Such activities can prepare them to play a socially useful role that is acknowledged by the community. Special efforts should be made to ensure girls participate in such training.

### 8.5 Follow up and monitoring

Family and community reunification is only the beginning of the reintegration process. Follow-up and monitoring are essential and require careful planning, adequate budgetary provisions, and the collaboration of key governmental bodies, UN agencies and NGOs. Staffing requirements are likely to increase as large numbers of children are reunited with their families because follow-up visiting and related mediation and problem solving becomes more labour-intensive and time-consuming as children are dispersed from a few central locations to scattered communities. Regular follow up or monitoring activities by professional social workers should constitute visits to children's homes, schools, and community, including meetings with families, peers, teachers, community leaders, etc. Regular monitoring of the living conditions of the child, the quality of his or her relationship with family members and the level of reintegration in the community will allow mediation of disputes when necessary. Community-based child protection networks and community leaders, especially women, should be actively involved in monitoring the safety and well-being of reunited children, and should progressively assume greater responsibility for ongoing monitoring to ensure a smooth take over of this work into community hands.

## **ANNEX 1      Legal and normative framework**

International legal instruments exist to prevent the recruitment of children and ensure their demobilization and reintegration after release from armed groups and forces. These instruments are used to: (i) protect children in armed conflicts; (ii) prevent the recruitment of children and secure their release from armed forces and groups; (iii) reintegrate children within their families and their communities; (iv) protect children within the judicial framework; and (v) prosecute or condemn those who are responsible for recruiting children for military purposes.

Global or regional instruments for protecting children such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child offer a framework for protecting children during conflicts and within the judicial system in order to prevent their recruitment. In addition, it should be noted that all human rights instruments also apply to children and that, in times of conflict, human rights law remains applicable, in addition to international humanitarian law.

There are a certain number of legal instruments and normative standards specifically regarding the prevention of the recruitment of children and their release:

### **The Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

- According to Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments shall take all feasible measures to ensure that children under the age of 15 do not take a direct part in hostilities. Article 39 calls on States Parties to take appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of armed conflict.
- Article 40 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child states that, whenever appropriate and desirable, measures for dealing with children alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law should be sought without resorting to judicial proceedings, providing that human rights and legal safeguards are fully respected. According to article 37, the detention of a child shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

### **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict:**

- On May 25, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Protocol raises the age for direct participation in hostilities from 15 to 18 years. The Optional Protocol prohibits conscription or forced recruitment and use by governments below the age of 18 and calls on States Parties to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment above 15. It prohibits all recruitment – voluntary or compulsory – of children under 18 by armed groups. Under Article 6, State Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons within their jurisdiction recruited or used in hostilities contrary to the Protocol are demobilized. States Parties shall accord to such persons all appropriate assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and their social reintegration. The OP entered into force on 12 February 2002.

### **ILO Convention N. 182**

- Under ILO Convention No. 182, States Parties shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which includes the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict (a child being defined as a person under the age of 18).

### **Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions**

- The Additional Protocols I (Articles 77(2) and 77(3)) and II (Article 4-3 c) to the Geneva Conventions call for the protection of children in armed conflict, forbid the recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 in conflict, and provide special treatment for children in detention.

#### **African Charter on the rights and Welfare of the Child**

- The 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child forbids the recruitment or the direct participation in combat of any person under the age of 18 (article 22).

#### **The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**

- The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) makes it a war crime, leading to individual criminal prosecution, to conscript or enlist children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces or groups or use them to participate actively in hostilities, in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

#### **United Nations Security Council Resolutions:**

The United Nations Security Council has adopted five resolutions on children in armed conflict, with specific provisions about children associated with armed forces and groups, in particular resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004).

- **Resolution 1261 (1999) on the Protection of Children and Armed Conflict**

Article 13 *urges* States and all relevant parts of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to ensure an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law through political and other efforts, including promotion of the availability of alternatives for children to their participation in armed conflict.

- **Resolution 1314 (2000) on the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict**

Article 3 urges all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the obligations applicable to them under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;

Article 11 requests parties to armed conflict to include, where appropriate, provisions for the protection of children, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child combatants, in peace negotiations and in peace agreements and the involvement of children, where possible, in these processes;

Article 13 Underlines the importance of giving consideration to the special needs and particular vulnerabilities of girls affected by armed conflict, including, inter alia, those heading households, orphaned, sexually exploited and used as combatants, and urges that their human rights, protection and welfare be incorporated in the development of policies and programmes, including those for prevention, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration;

Article 16 (f) urges member states to consider declaring regional initiatives towards full implementation of the prohibition of the use of child soldiers in violation of international law;

Article 17 encourages Member States, relevant parts of the United Nations system and regional organizations and arrangements to undertake efforts to obtain the release of children abducted during armed conflict and their family reunification;

- **Resolution 1379 (November 2001)**

(Art 1) Expresses its determination to give the fullest attention to the question of the protection of children in armed conflict when considering the matters of which it is seized

(Art 8) Calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to (...) e) Provide protection of children in peace agreements, including, where appropriate, provisions relating to the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers and the reunification of families, and to consider, when possible, the views of children in those processes;

(Art 11), Requests the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations to (...) b) Take account of ways of reducing child recruitment that is contrary to accepted international standards when formulating development assistance programmes; (c) Devote particular attention and adequate resources to the rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict, particularly their counselling, education and appropriate vocational opportunities, as a preventive measure and as a means of reintegrating them into society; (d) Ensure that the special needs and particular vulnerabilities of girls affected by armed conflict, including those heading households, orphaned, sexually exploited and used as combatants, are duly taken into account in the design of development assistance programmes, and that adequate resources are allocated to such programmes.

- **Resolution 1460 (30 January 2003)**

(Art 3) Calls upon all parties to armed conflict, who are recruiting or using children in violation of the international obligations applicable to them, to immediately halt such recruitment or use of children;

(Art 4) Expresses its intention to enter into dialogue, as appropriate, or to support the Secretary-General in entering into dialogue with parties to armed conflict in violation of the international obligations applicable to them on the recruitment or use of children in armed conflict, in order to develop clear and time bound action plans to end this practice;

(Art 5) Notes with concern the list annexed to the Secretary-General's report, and calls on the parties identified in this list to provide information on steps they have taken to halt their recruitment or use of children in armed conflict in violation of the international obligations applicable to them, to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, bearing in mind the provisions of paragraph 9 of its resolution 1379 (2001);

(Art 13) Calls upon Member States and international organizations to ensure that children affected by armed conflict are involved in all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, taking into account the specific needs and capacities of girls, and that the duration of these processes is sufficient for a successful transition to normal life, with a particular emphasis on education, including the monitoring, through, inter alia, schools, of children demobilized in order to prevent re-recruitment;

- **Resolution 1539 (20 April 2004)**

(Art 1) Strongly condemns the recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to armed conflict in violation of international obligations applicable to them, killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence mostly committed against girls, abduction and forced displacement, denial of humanitarian access to children, attacks against schools and hospitals as well as trafficking, forced labour and all forms of slavery and all other violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict;

(Art 8) Reiterates its requests to all parties concerned, including United Nations agencies, funds and programmes as well as financial institutions, to continue to ensure that all children associated with armed forces and groups, as well as issues related to children, are systematically included in

every disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, taking into account the specific needs and capacities of girls, with a particular emphasis on education, including the monitoring, through, inter alia, schools, of children demobilized in order to prevent re-recruitment and bearing in mind the assessment of best practices, including those contained in paragraph 65 of the report of the Secretary-General.

- [Resolution 1612 \(26 July 2005\)](#)

Paragraph 3 of Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) requests the Secretary General to establish a monitoring and reporting system for children affected by armed conflict. The mechanism requires both governments and armed groups to use time-bound plans of action to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers and requires the UN system to monitor and report on egregious violations against children, including the killing or maiming of children; recruitment or use of child soldiers; attacks against schools or hospitals; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access. The resolution requires that such a mechanism operates with the participation of, and in cooperation with, national government and relevant United Nations and civil society actors. Application of the monitoring mechanism will begin with parties in situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to Secretary-General's report (S/2005/72) that are on the agenda of the Security Council: parties in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, and then, in close consultation with countries concerned, will apply to parties in other situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to Secretary-General's report (S/2005/72): Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.

- **Additional relevant legislation and standards**

- In a recent decision, the Special Court in Sierra Leone affirmed that the recruitment of children under the age of 15 was a war crime entailing individual criminal responsibility under customary international law, even before this principle was codified with the adoption of the Rome Statute of the ICC in 1998.
- At the judicial level, juvenile justice rules are applied to children, in particular the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (1995), United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles deprived of their Liberty (1990), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976—art 6 and 10).
- Domestic legal instruments raising the age of recruitment into armed forces to the age of 18 years constitute the national legal framework: child protection code, family code, labour code or penal code.
- Cape Town Principles and Best Practices, April 1997. Adopted at the symposium on the prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces and on demobilization and social reintegration of child soldiers in Africa, the Cape Town principles are most noted for reaching agreement on the definition of a child soldier: "Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms".

## **ANNEX 2: Situation Analysis: Some Key Questions<sup>5</sup>**

### Root causes and impact of the conflict

- Contextual analysis: What are the social, political, economic, cultural origins of the conflict? Is it perceived as a struggle for liberation? Is it limited to a particular part of the country? Does it involve particular groups or people or is it more generalised?
  - What is the ideology of the force or group? Do they have a political ideology? Do they have political, social or other goals? What means does the group use to pursue its ideology? Who supports the groups/forces? What is their level of legitimacy?
  - How is the group structured? Where is the locus of power? How many levels of hierarchy exist? Does the leadership have tight control over its forces? Who do child soldiers report to? How is authority/rank established? Who makes decisions regarding the force's/group's movements? Have the groups/forces had foreign sponsors (companies, organisations)?
  - Does the force/group target particular ethnic, religious, geographic, socio-economic groups for recruitment? Are girls and boys targeted equally? Where does the force/group do most of its recruitment? Is recruitment 'voluntary,' forced or compulsory? Looking back over 3, 6, 12 months, has recruitment been increasing or decreasing, and does it differ over the year? Are children promised anything when they join up (e.g. promises of protection for their families, money, goods, weapons, etc.)? What is the proportion of children in the armed force/group?
  - What living conditions did the children experience while in the armed force/group? How do the children feel about their conditions? Was there exploitation or abuse, and if so, for how long and of what kind? How are boys and girls affected differently by their recruitment and use as child soldiers? What kind of work did children perform in the armed force/group? How has children's behaviour changed as a result of being recruited? Have their attitudes and values changed? What were the children's expectations of the force/group prior to recruitment? How do children recruited understand their role in the conflict? What are their expectations of the future? How can their experience be harnessed for productive purposes?
- | ➤ How do the communities feel about the impact of the conflict on children? How do communities view the role of children in the armed groups and forces? What impact is this likely to have on their reintegration? How has the conflict affected perceptions of roles of girls and women? What are the peoples' understanding of children's responsibility in the conflict? What social, cultural and traditional practices exist to help children's reintegration into their communities? How familiar are children with these practices?

### **Annex 3: Management** Guidelines for Interim care centres

Interim care centres are not a necessary step in all DDR situations. Indeed, it is a widely held view among protection agencies that children should be reunited with their families and communities as soon as possible and it is feared that an interim centre may delay this reunification. Nevertheless, while, in some circumstances, immediate reunification and support can be channelled through the families and communities without resort to a transit centre, at other times, a centre can provide a protected interim environment prior to family reunification.

Other advantages to interim care centres include: they provide the necessary space and time to carry out family tracing and verification; they provide a secure space in an otherwise insecure context prior to reunification; they allow for the provision of medical support; and they provide additional time to children to sever links with the military.

Guiding Principles and Implementation strategies:

The decision to open a centre should be based on the following conditions:

- the level of insecurity in community of origin;
- the level of success in tracing the child's family or primary caregiver;
- the level of medical assistance and follow-up required prior to integration;
- the level of immediate psychosocial support required prior to reintegration.

#### **Management guidelines:**

- Child Protection specialists should manage the centres.
- Children should only stay a limited amount of time in interim care centres, and documentation and monitoring systems should be established to ensure the length of stay is brief (weeks not months). At the end of their stay, if family reunification is not feasible, children should be directed to alternative care solutions (such as foster families, extended family networks).
- Systems should be established to protect children from abuse and a code of conduct adopted.
- An adequate number of male and female staff should be available to deal with the different needs of boys and girls.
- Staff should be trained in child gender based violence and exploitation, norms of confidentiality, child psychosocial development, tracing and reunification.
- Age limits: ICCs should only accommodate children under 18. Some flexibility can be considered, based on the best interests of the child, for instance in relation to girl mothers with infants and children or on medical grounds, on a case by case basis. In addition, there should be a separation between young children (under 14) and adolescents in order to avoid any abuse between older and younger children.
- Sanitation and accommodation facilities should separate girls from boys, and be sensitive to needs of infants and girl mothers.
- ICCs should be located at a safe distance from conflict and recruitment areas.
- External access to the centre should be controlled (entry not granted to adult combatants and fighters, media and visitors' and family access controlled).
- Security should be provided by peacekeepers or neutral forces.

**Activity guidelines:**

- Tracing, verification, reunification and monitoring should be undertaken.
- Interim care should take place within a community-based tracing and reintegration programme to facilitate the return of children to their communities (including community outreach), and to promote the protection and development of war-affected children in general. Experience has demonstrated that when only care is offered, centres present a risk of children becoming “institutionalized” and dependent.
- Health check-ups and specialised health services should be provided when necessary, e.g. reproductive health and antenatal services, diagnosis of STIs, voluntary and confidential HIV testing with appropriate psychosocial support; nutritional deficiencies, and war-related injuries.
- Basic psycho-social counselling should be provided, including help to overcome trauma, develop self-esteem and life skills.
- Information and guidance should be provided on the reintegration opportunities available.
- Activities should focus on restoring the social norms and routines of civilian life.
- Age and gender-appropriate sports, cultural and recreational activities should be provided.
- Community sensitisation should be carried out prior to the child’s arrival,
- Formal education or training activities should not be provided at the ICC; however, literacy testing can be conducted
- The surrounding communities of the ICC should be sensitised about the ICC’s role. Children in the centres should be encouraged to participate in community activities to encourage mutual trust.
- Peace education should be part of the everyday life during interim care. It should also be part of the formal programmes and cover principles and objectives of peace education, values related to non-violent resolution of conflicts.

**Advantages and disadvantages of centre-based approaches:**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides a stable and protected interim environment</li><li>• Allows for medical treatment and identification of other specific needs</li><li>• Provides first steps in breaking ties to military hierarchy</li><li>• Provides time for family tracing, verification, and community sensitisation and preparation</li><li>• Allows for in-depth reintegration planning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assistance channelled to ICCs reduces assistance available to families and communities</li><li>• Impact on the child (positive or negative) has not been definitively determined</li><li>• May provide a disincentive for the family to assume responsibility for its child</li><li>• May unnecessarily delay family or community reunification and reintegration</li><li>• Creates temptation to provide to provide longer term support, delaying reintegration</li></ul>



#### **Annex 4      Select catalogue of lessons learned and tools**

BICC “Demobilization and Reintegration in Central America” (1997)

Bodineau, S. « Evaluation de la phase pilote du Programme de démobilisation et réinsertion des enfants soldats dans la région de Kinshasa », BUNADER, UNICEF, Ministère des Droits Humains, (Novembre 2002)

Boothby, N., Crawford, J., Halperin, J., “Mozambique Child Soldier Life Outcomes Study: Lessons Learned in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Efforts” International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice, Routledge (2006).

Brett, R. “Girls soldiers : Challenging the Assumptions” Quakers United Nations Office [http://www.geneva.quno.info/pdf/Girl\\_Soldiers.doc.pdf](http://www.geneva.quno.info/pdf/Girl_Soldiers.doc.pdf)

Brett, R. “Why do adolescents volunteer for armed forces or armed groups?” , Quaker United Nations Office, for Spanish Red Cross International Conference “Adding Colour to Peace”, Valencia, Spain, (5-7 November 2003),

Brett, R. and Sprecht, I. “Young soldiers. Why they choose to fight” ILO, Geneva, (2004), 192 pages.

Brett, R. “Juvenile Justice, Counter terrorism and Children”, Disarmament Forum, (2002)

Deng Deng, W. “A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers”, Sponsored and financed by the Government of Japan, (March 2001) [www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human/child/survey/index.htm](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human/child/survey/index.htm)

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, “Global Report” (2004)

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, “Briefing to the Security Council: Open Debate on Children IN Armed Conflict” (2004)

Croix-Rouge de Belgique, Amnesty International, UNICEF «La guerre Enfants admis, 300.000 enfants-soldats dans le monde: comment combattre ce fleau?», Coedition Grip - Editions Complexes, (2001), Legrand, J.C. « Demobilisation and Reintegration des enfants-soldats: Relever le defi d'une veritable rupture avec le cycle d la violence, Quel est le bilan apres 10 annees d'experiences dans la demobilisation et la reinserction des enfants-soldats? » [www.grip.org](http://www.grip.org)

ILO, “Wounded Childhood. The Use of Children in Armed Conflict in Central Africa”, Washington, (April 2003) <http://www.ilo.org/public/french/standards/ipecc/publ/childsoldiers/manuel.pdf> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/philippines/ra/soldiers.pdf>

IRC, “Family reunification, alternative care and community reintegration of separated children in post-conflict Rwanda” Monograph series Number 1, (August 2003) [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/the\\_funds/pubs/index.htm](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/pubs/index.htm)

Jareg, E. “Steps in the Development of a Monitoring and Evaluation System for Centre and Community Based Psychosocial Work with War-Affected Children in Uganda”. Report from a consultation with GUSCO Save the Children Norway.

Kelly D. "The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Liberia : 1994-1997: The Process and Lessons Learned", New York, UNICEF, (1998), 75 pages, a collaborative report by UNICEF-Liberia and the US National Committee for UNICEF pdf format

Lindsey, C. "Women Facing war : ICRC Study on the impact of armed conflict on women", ICRC publication, (2001)

Legrand, J.C. "Lessons Learned from UNICEF Field Programmes for the Prevention of Recruitment, Demobilization and Reintegration of Child Soldiers" draft (October 1999)

Mazurana, D. McKay, S. "Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War" International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Quebec, (2004)  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3531641.stm>

McConnan, I. and Uppard, S. "Children, not soldiers. Guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces" , Save the Children UK, (2001)  
<http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2002/sc-children-dec01.htm>  
<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=2407&flag=report>

Nicolai S. and Triplehorn, C. "The Role of education in protecting children in conflict" Network HPN Paper, Overseas Development Institute, London, (2003) <http://www.odihpn.org.uk>

Peters, K. and Laws, S. Ed. Pettit, B and Petty, C. "When Children affected by war go home: Lessons Learned from Liberia" Save the Children (2003)

Quaker United Nations Offices, "The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers", (2002)  
<http://www.geneva.quno.info/pdf>

School for a Culture of Peace, Spain, «Comparative Analysis on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Research Project, Disarmament and Human Security Programme

SIPA "From Prevention to Reintegration : an evaluation of IOM's Support programme for ex-combatants Children in Colombia IOM", Columbia University Evaluation Team, (May 2, 2003)

Thapa, M "Girls in the War". Centre for Investigative Journalism, HIMAL, (June 2003)

UNICEF, "Analysis of the Reintegration of Demobilized Child Soldiers in Rwanda", Kigali, (June 2003)

UNICEF- OLS, South Sudan, "An evaluation of the demobilisation and reintegration of children in Southern Sudan (2001-2004)", (2005).

UNICEF, West and Central Africa Regional Office, Emergency Section, "The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Children Associated with Fighting Forces: Lessons Learned in Sierra Leone 1998-2002" (2005).

UNICEF East and Southern Africa Regional Office, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children – Norway, Save the Children – Sweden, Save the Children Fund – UK "Working with Children Associated with Armed Forces in Ongoing Conflicts. A discussion paper building on the (October 2001) Nairobi Inter-Agency Meeting on Demobilization of Child Soldiers during Armed Conflict", (August 2003), final draft, prepared by Beth Verhey based on materials by Trish Hiddleston. Word file (read only)

UNICEF “Community-Based Approaches to Reintegration of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: An Overview of Approaches, Lessons Learned and Challenges” (October 2003), Istituto degli Innocenti, Florence, Italy

UNICEF “Working with Children in unstable situations. Principles and Concepts to guide psychosocial responses” Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, (2003)

UNICEF, UNMIK, Government of Kosovo “Let’s talk – Developing effective communication with child victims of abuse and human trafficking: A practical handbook for social workers, police and other professionals”, (2004)

UNICEF EAPRO, “Adult Wars, Child Soldiers: Voices of Children involved in armed conflict in East Asia and Pacific Region” (2002)

UNIFEM, “Getting it Right, Doing it right : Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, October (2004) [www.womenwarpeace.org/issues/ddr/gettingitright.pdf](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/issues/ddr/gettingitright.pdf)

Verhey, B. “Reaching the Girls: Study on girls Associated with Armed Forces and Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo”, Save the Children and the NGO group, November 2004.

Verhey, B. Going Home. Demobilising and Reintegrating Child Soldiers in the DRC, Save the Children, (March 2003) 80 pages <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2003/save-drc-02oct.pdf>

Verhey, B. « Les enfants soldats : Prevenir, demobiliser et reintegrer » (Septembre 2001), Region Afrique - Banque Mondiale [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/ChildSoldiersPreventingDemobilizingandReintegratingAfricaRegionWorkingPaperSeriesNo23FrenchTranslation/\\$FILE/Enfants soldats.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/ChildSoldiersPreventingDemobilizingandReintegratingAfricaRegionWorkingPaperSeriesNo23FrenchTranslation/$FILE/Enfants soldats.pdf)

Verhey, B. “Le retour au Berceaul : la demobilisation et la reintegration d’enfants soldats dans les provinces du Sud et Nord Kivu, les experiences et les lecons qui sont degagees de 1999 a 2002 », Save the Children- UK, (2003)

Verhey, B, “Child Soldiers : Preventing, Demobilizing and Reintegrating”. November 2001), African Region Working Paper Series, No. 23, World Bank, 31 pages This is accessible on the World Bank Post-Conflict website :[http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/ChildSoldiersPreventingDemobilizingandReintegratingAfricaRegionWorkingPaperSeriesNo23/\\$FILE/Child+soldiers.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/ChildSoldiersPreventingDemobilizingandReintegratingAfricaRegionWorkingPaperSeriesNo23/$FILE/Child+soldiers.pdf); [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/CaseStudiesThePreventionDemobilizationandReintegrationofChildSoldiers/\\$FILE/angola+case+-+july+2001+final.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/CaseStudiesThePreventionDemobilizationandReintegrationofChildSoldiers/$FILE/angola+case+-+july+2001+final.pdf) (Angola) [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/ElSalvadorCaseStudyTheDemobilizationandReintegrationofChildSoldiers/\\$FILE/elsalvadorcasefinalwannex.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/ElSalvadorCaseStudyTheDemobilizationandReintegrationofChildSoldiers/$FILE/elsalvadorcasefinalwannex.pdf) (El Salvador)

Watteville, N. “Addressing Gender Issues in Demobilization and Reintegration Programs” (August 2002) Africa Region Working Paper Series, Number 33, World Bank, 35 p. [ndewatteville@hotmail.com](mailto:ndewatteville@hotmail.com)

Williamson, J. and Cripe, L. Assessment of the DCOF-Supported Child Demobilization Activities in Sierra Leone (2002)

Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children “DDR and Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone: Excerpts from Precious Resources : adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra

Leone” (April-June 2002) [http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/sl\\_ddr03.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/sl_ddr03.pdf)

#### **Practical Field Tools:**

UNICEF, “Guidelines on ethical reporting – Protecting Children at Risk: Child Soldiers - Principles for ethical reporting on children”, [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_tools\\_guidelines.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html)

UNHCR, UNICEF, OHCHR, Save the Children Alliance, “Action for the Rights of Children (ARC)” 2002. CD-ROM resource packs on child soldiers – <http://www.savethechildren.ch>

UNHCR, UNICEF, OHCHR, Save the Children Alliance «Action pour le droit de l'Enfant (ADE) », 2004, [www.savethechildren.ch](http://www.savethechildren.ch)

UNICEF, Guide to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict [http://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_19025.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_19025.html).

IASC, “Guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in emergency settings”, (July 2004) [www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc)

UNICEF “Technical Notes Special Considerations for Programming in Unstable Circumstances” 2001 CD-ROM – Hard copy, 2003

UNICEF Sierra Leone, Guidelines For Community Based Reintegration

UNICEF UNHQ Lessons learned on engaging with non-state armed groups, DRAFT (July 2002)

UNICEF East Asia Pacific Regional Office, “Guidelines On Methodology On How To Carry An Assessment On The Protection Of Children In The Region”, DRAFT (2003)

UNICEF « Protocole d'Accord entre Le Ministère des Droits de la Personne Humaine, des Réformes Institutionnelles et des Relations avec l'Assemblée Nationale du Gouvernement du Burundi et le Bureau de l'UNICEF au Burundi » (2001)

Inter-Agency Group on Separated Children, “Registration Family Tracing Form, Final on Separated and Unaccompanied Children” (January 2004)

“Memorandum of understanding between the Executive Secretariat of the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR) and UNICEF” Freetown (2000)

UNAMSIL, “Age verification procedures”, , Sierra Leone (2000)

Government of Sierra Leone, ES NCDDR and UNICEF, “Guidelines For Assisting Children From the Fighting forces in the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme” Freetown (2000)

---

<sup>1</sup> This module came about after consultation within the United Nations with the Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR and a broad consultation process involving specialized international child protection non-governmental organizations: Save the Children-UK, the International Rescue Committee, Christian Children's Fund, and World Vision International. Appreciation is extended to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for their contribution.

<sup>2</sup> See the Secretary General's Bulletin on special measures to protect children and women against sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises.

<sup>3</sup> Some guidance already exists and may be used as reference, i.e. "International Criminal Justice and Children", UNICEF-IRC and No Peace without Justice, 2002 agreement drafted on the involvement of child witnesses in proceedings of the Special Court for Sierra Leone; vulnerability list prepared for child witnesses to the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC, IRC, Save the Children, World Vision international, "Inter-agency Guiding Principles on unaccompanied and separated children", January 2004. In addition, the Riyadh Guidelines covers prevention of family separation and promotes the integrity of the family.

<sup>5</sup> Useful publications: McConnan, I. and Uppard, S. (2001), [Children Not Soldiers, Guidelines for Working with Child Soldiers and Children Associated with Fighting Forces](#) Save the Children UK, London; Slim, H. and Eguren, L.H. (Pilot version 2005), [Humanitarian Protection: A Guidance Booklet the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance \(ANALP\). Guidelines for undertaking an assessment of the situation of children affected by armed conflict and unstable environment](#), UNICEF, Jean-Claude Legrand , CP Section, NYHQ, DRAFT, (November 1999) (unpublished).