

ARC resource pack

Study material

Critical issue module 7

Children associated with
armed forces or armed groups



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This module is one of the following series of **ARC resource pack** modules.

Foundation modules

- 1 Understanding childhoods
- 2 Child rights-based approaches
- 3 Programme design
- 4 Participation and inclusion
- 5 Advocacy
- 6 Community mobilisation
- 7 Psychosocial support

Critical issue modules

- 1 Abuse and exploitation
- 2 Education
- 3 Children with disabilities
- 4 Sexual and reproductive health
- 5 Landmine awareness
- 6 Separated children
- 7 Children associated with armed forces or armed groups

All modules include:

- **study material** giving detailed information on the module's subject and a list of further reading
- **slides** giving key learning points and extracts from the study material, offering a useful resource when introducing training events and exercises
- **training material** for participatory workshops that comprises **exercises** giving practical guidance for facilitators and **handouts** for participants.

The following documents are also included in the ARC resource pack CD-ROM to ensure you can make the most of these modules.

- User guide
An introduction to the ARC resource pack and the relationships between modules.
- Training manual
Advice and ideas for training with ARC resource pack materials.
- Facilitator's toolkit
General guidance on how to be an effective facilitator, with step-by-step introductions to a wide range of training methods.
- Definitions of terms
- Acronyms

See **Guidance for training on critical issues** at the end of this document for further help in developing ARC workshops.

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Introduction

Facilitators who have not recently trained or worked in the area covered by this module should read carefully through the various topics, slides, exercises, handouts and readings before starting to plan their training activity. Please note that these materials aim to stimulate learning and discussion, and should be used in conjunction with stated policy (they do not replace it). Trainers are encouraged to adapt the module to their specific geographical or cultural context and to supplement topics with their own or locally relevant material.

Despite a growing focus of international attention and wide condemnation of the practice, the recruitment and use of children in conflict continues across the world. Children are used in a variety of ways including support roles, as spies or informants, in active front-line fighting or for sexual purposes. Many of these children die or survive with a disability as a result of their experiences; for others the physical, emotional, developmental, mental and spiritual suffering and harm is immeasurable.

Progress has been made in several areas:

- an increase in awareness of the issues at community, national and international level
- a more inclusive response focusing on strengthening the capacity of communities to protect children
- a greater understanding of the underlying issues and ongoing efforts to incorporate lessons learnt into policy and programmes.

Recent research has listened to the voices of children, and programmes increasingly include their views and ideas in designing and developing responses. This is particularly important in addressing the complex needs of girls recruited and used by armed actors and is one way of recognising and building on the resilience of all children.

Considerable progress has also been made in relation to the development and application of legal provisions and standards relating to the recruitment and use of children. As of July 2009, 128 States are party to the optional protocol to the UN Convention on the rights of the child (CRC) on the involvement of children in armed conflict and a significant step towards ending impunity was made through the adoption of the statute of the International Criminal Court, which makes the conscripting or enlisting of children under the age of 15 years or using them to participate actively in hostilities a war crime, both in international and internal armed conflict and whether by armed forces or armed groups.

A robust approach that combines advocacy for the ratification and implementation of legal standards together with a long-term commitment to supporting communities is required to ensure the recruitment and re-recruitment of children is prevented and those children who have already been recruited are released, protected and provided with the support they need to successfully reintegrate into society.

The recruitment and use of children is a complex issue and can be extremely sensitive, bringing agencies into the political and military arena. A broad set of skills and knowledge is required to fully address not only the immediate child protection concerns but also the underlying causes which include poverty and lack of livelihoods, family separation or breakdown and lack of access to education. An understanding of



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the law and judicial systems relevant to children is also important. Agencies seeking to prevent recruitment and support children associated with armed forces or armed groups have a responsibility to ensure that their actions are based on child rights and humanitarian principles. Agencies should also have systems in place to ensure quality programmes and minimum standards are applied.

This module does not attempt to address all areas fully but aims to support the development of skills and knowledge in relation to emergency aspects, and to provide information and links for those who require more detailed resources and guidance.

Structure and content of the module

The circumstances relating to the recruitment and use of children are very different in different contexts and cannot be addressed through one approach or model. No single model can either explain all the factors, or outline a uniform procedure that will prevent child recruitment, and enable procedures for the demobilisation and reintegration of children who have participated in conflict. This is dependent upon an understanding of the local context, and the resources available to protect children and secure their wellbeing. Throughout this module the importance of situation analysis is emphasised; this may need to be repeated or updated in rapidly changing circumstances. The situation analysis should include a risk analysis, and a gender analysis is essential to ensure girls are not at risk of being invisible.

The table below outlines the structure and content of study material and also provides references to the **Foundation** modules relevant to each topic.

Topic	Critical issue	Relevant Foundation modules
Topic 1	The issue for children	
	Working with children associated with armed forces and armed groups: approaches and key principles.	Understanding childhoods Child rights-based approaches Programme design Participation and inclusion Advocacy
	This topic outlines the problem and impact on children of recruitment by armed forces or armed groups and highlights the importance of the following: facilitating the participation of those affected; children, their families and communities, in all aspects of prevention, protection, release and reintegration; working to support a broad child protection framework rather than targeting individual children, the importance of situation analysis including a risk analysis. The issue of girls, including those who have children as a result of their association with armed forces or armed groups, and their children, is introduced in this topic in order to call attention to the need to develop specific initiatives for their support.	



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Topic 2	The law and child rights	Child rights-based approaches Advocacy
<p>A rights-based approach: legal and normative framework relating to recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups.</p> <p>This topic emphasises the importance of using child rights-based approaches and being informed by a child development perspective. It outlines what is meant by a legal and normative framework, what agency staff need to know and why, what the law says in relation to protection of children and the promotion of their rights, prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups, the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups, the treatment of children in the justice system and the prosecution of those responsible for recruiting children.</p>		
Topic 3	Assessment and situation analysis	Programme design Participation and inclusion
<p>Understanding the reasons for recruitment. Children are recruited into armed forces or armed groups for many reasons and as a result of different underlying causes. This topic underlines the importance of situation analysis in order to understand the precise interplay of factors in any situation and develop prevention strategies which respond to these. Child rights situation analysis (CRSA), which should be used where possible, is introduced in this topic.</p>		
Topic 4	Planning and implementation	Understanding childhoods Child rights-based approaches Programme design Participation and inclusion Advocacy Community mobilisation Psychosocial support
<p>Implementation strategies: prevention of and response to recruitment</p> <p>This topic underlines the importance of collaboration, cooperation and complementarity between all actors and outlines the different levels of implementation: advocacy, capacity building and direct service delivery.</p> <p>Implementation strategies are considered under three headings: prevention of recruitment; release or demobilisation from armed forces or armed groups and reintegration.</p> <p><i>Prevention of recruitment</i></p> <p>Wherever recruitment is occurring or has the potential to occur, actions to prevent</p>		



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recruitment should be undertaken urgently, based on the reasons for recruitment.

A prevention strategy should include the application of relevant law and standards, practical measures to improve children's safety and programming to prevent recruitment. Strategies should be designed in consultation with children, families and communities and build on and develop their own actions to prevent recruitment.

Release or demobilisation from armed forces or armed groups

The humanitarian imperative to seek the release of children from armed forces or armed groups at all times; the way in which children leave armed forces or groups is described as well as actions to promote or secure the release of children from armed forces or armed groups, planning for the release or demobilisation of children and what should happen to children during a release process. Challenges or key issues are discussed; criteria or eligibility for release, including girls, documentation of information including release papers, the release of children not in their own State, material benefits and assistance, the attitudes of staff and prevention of re-recruitment. Health issues, disability and appropriate psychosocial support are included as well as discussion around interim care for children.

Reintegration

The long-term needs of children and the communities to which they return including the need to ensure activities in communities benefit a wide range of conflict affected children and avoid distinctions between children associated with armed forces or armed groups and other children. This includes discussion of what is meant by reintegration and how this can be supported, family reunification, the relationship of children with the community to which they return and ways in which their transition can be aided. Health and psychosocial aspects and the particular needs of girls are also covered. Education, vocational training and livelihoods are all critical aspect of reintegration but safety and security issues also have to be



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addressed.

Implementation strategies: reintegration

This topic looks at the importance of building a protective environment and developing the capacity to protect children associated with armed forces and armed groups and highlights the importance of a realistic assessment of gaps in capacity at all levels (community, local government, national government) in order to inform a strategic and collaborative approach to building capacity to protect children.

Topic 5 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

This topic outlines the need for programmes working with children associated with armed forces and armed groups to ensure they have the capacity for monitoring in the following areas:

- the wellbeing of children following their reintegration into family and community
- monitoring and evaluation of programmes (M & E)
- monitoring and reporting of human rights violations, including recruitment.

The dynamic nature of monitoring is highlighted and the range of purposes for ways in which monitoring is used.

Child rights-based approaches
Programme design
Participation and inclusion
Community mobilisation

This module draws extensively on a number of key documents which should be referred to in full for those requiring a more detailed understanding of children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

The importance of the CRC

The human rights of children are fully articulated in one treaty: the CRC, offering the highest standard of protection and assistance for children under any international instrument. The approach of the convention is holistic, which means that the rights are indivisible and interrelated, and that all articles are equally important.

Of particular significance in relation to children associated with armed forces or armed groups is the Optional protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 May 2000, increasing the protection of children from involvement in armed conflict. The Optional protocol raises from 15 to 18 years the age at which participation in armed conflicts will be permitted and establishes a ban on compulsory recruitment below 18 years. Regarding the age at which national forces will permit voluntary recruitment, the protocol requires States to make a declaration upon ratification, as well as a description of the safeguards it has adopted to ensure that such recruitment is never forced or coerced. The minimum age for recruitment into armed groups is always 18 years, whether voluntary or compulsory.



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Definitions of terms

The following definitions are taken from the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

The Paris commitments to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups (The Paris commitments) and the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups (The Paris principles) replaced the Cape Town principles and best practices on the prevention of recruitment of children into the armed forces and social reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups in Africa. Adopted in 1997 the **Cape Town principles** obtained wide recognition and were a key instrument to inform policy and practice. A global process to review the Cape Town principles, involving seven regional reviews, was undertaken by UNICEF and partners in 2006. This led to agreement on the need for two documents. The first one short and concise: The Paris commitments and a second complementary document containing more detailed guidance for those implementing programmes: The Paris principles. These two documents were endorsed by 58 States at a conference in Paris in February 2007.

- **Child** Refers to any person less than 18 years of age in accordance with the CRC.
- **A child associated with an armed force or armed groups** Refers to any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.
- **Armed forces** Refers to the armed force of a State.
- **Armed groups** Refers to groups distinct from armed forces as defined by Article 4 of the Optional protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- **Recruitment** Refers to compulsory, forced and voluntary conscription or enlistment of children into any kind of armed force or armed group.
- **Release** Includes the process of formal and controlled disarmament and demobilisation of children from an armed force or group as well as the informal ways in which children leave by escaping, being captured or by any other means. It implies a disassociation from the armed force or armed group and the beginning of the transition from military to civilian life. Release can take place during a situation of armed conflict; it is not dependent on the temporary or permanent cessation of hostilities. Nor is release dependent on children having weapons to forfeit.
- **Disarmament** Refers to the voluntary or obligatory removal of weapons from children.
- **Reintegration** Is the process through which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for children to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured. This



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process aims to ensure that children can access their rights, including formal and non-formal education, family unity, dignified livelihoods and safety from harm.

- **Formal DDR process** Refers to an agreed, formal disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process following or as part of a peace process.
- **Child protection** While assuring the physical safety of children is crucial, child protection in emergencies encompasses more than stopping attacks or moving children out of harm's way. It includes measures that promote children's physical and emotional wellbeing, provide them equal access to basic services, and safeguard their legal and human rights. After a conflict, protection programmes provide long-term support to those who have suffered.



Topic 1

The issue for children

Working with children associated with armed forces or armed groups: approach and key principles

'My man, if I die, let me die, but I cannot hold a gun and harass people, taking their money. I cannot do it.'

13-year-old boy explaining why he did not join armed groups in Liberia

Key learning points

- The recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups is a gross violation of their rights and must be addressed urgently. Recruitment occurs for a vast range of reasons and reflects a failure on the part of duty bearers to provide protection for children.
- The participation of those affected: children, their families and communities, in all aspects of prevention, protection, release and reintegration is essential.
- Measures to prevent recruitment and support the release and reintegration of children from armed forces or groups should be carried out within a broad child protection framework that includes all children affected by emergencies. Targeting individual children is likely to increase the stigma and impede reintegration and should be avoided.
- The specific needs of girls and their children should be given particular attention in all aspects of work with children associated with armed forces or groups. One way to achieve this is through ensuring programmes are sufficiently flexible to respond to their stated needs.
- Continuous efforts will be required to educate donors and advocate for flexible and long-term funding.

Recruitment of children into armed forces and armed groups

Hundreds of thousands of children are recruited and used by armed forces or armed groups around the world. Children are used in a variety of ways including support roles, as spies or informants, in active **front line** fighting or for sexual purposes. Many of these children die or live with a disability as a result of their experiences; for others the physical, emotional, developmental, mental and spiritual suffering and harm is immeasurable.

Agencies should be alert to the potential for recruitment to occur in all complex emergencies, disasters and other such situations, even where armed conflict is not taking place. The turmoil and confusion which follows a natural disaster for example can leave children vulnerable to recruitment, especially in conflict prone areas of the world.

Recruitment and use of children in armed conflict is a major child protection concern and involves gross violations of children's rights. Activities to prevent recruitment, protect affected children and facilitate the release and reintegration of children already



recruited should be undertaken urgently where recruitment is occurring or the potential for this is identified.

A situation analysis, which describes the reasons why children have or may become associated with armed forces or armed groups and the motivation of those recruiting them should be carried out within the context of, and in association with, a broad situation analysis (see **Topic 3** and **Foundation module 3** Programme design, **Section 3**). This should include a gender analysis and an analysis of power dynamics.

A thorough understanding of the political, socio economic and cultural context is required in order to address the complex set of circumstances that surround recruitment. For example, the issues for a child who joins an armed group for ideological reasons are very different to those relating to a child who was abducted; formulating a response around assumed psychosocial needs will not provide solutions for a child whose livelihood depends on membership of an armed group. Many emergency situations are very fluid so the situation analysis must be ongoing and programmes sufficiently flexible to respond to changing circumstances.

For solutions to be sustainable and address the underlying causes of recruitment, a strategic approach is needed which spans humanitarian and development work. However, actions to prevent recruitment and support the release of children already recruited should not wait until the end of conflict or later in an emergency. Agencies should develop a response and advocate for funding and resources to be made available as soon as they are aware of this issue.

Participation

A core aspect to all work with children associated with armed forces or armed groups relates to the view of children as resilient and as social actors. There is an increasing recognition of the need to not just consult with children but also include them as active participants or agents in designing, developing and evaluating responses. As well as producing more relevant programmes this sends the message to children that they are strong and have a lot to offer and gives them back a degree of control over their lives.

The active inclusion of those children affected and their communities, in all aspects of programming: assessment, planning, programme design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, is essential. Their views should inform the planning and development of all programmes. This will result in better and more effective programmes, which reflect the real issues and underlying causes, and will in itself promote the recovery and healing of those children affected. Facilitating the participation of children is central to their readjustment and recovery. This has implications in relation to funding; donor requirements may lead to the design of programmes being pre-empted, that is, the programme has to be designed before funding can be obtained. Agencies should advocate with donors for funding which is sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to children's needs so that participation is meaningful.

An inclusive approach

Programmes or other initiatives to prevent recruitment or support the release, reintegration or protection of children associated with armed forces or armed groups should not discriminate or make any negative distinction between children who have been recruited and those who have not. The needs of all children should be addressed



within a broad child protection framework; the provision of specific support to children associated with armed forces or armed groups, which is not available to other children with similar needs, causes tensions and impedes reintegration, as this example from Sierra Leone demonstrates:

'We are not respected because they [peers] are always calling us rebels. Even when we are given school supplies [by an NGO supplying DDR benefits] our friends tell us that the supplies are blood supplies.'

No place like home? Save the Children UK

Considerable advocacy may be required with donors to support this inclusive approach. Funding will need to be available and agencies should lobby for funding to be made available for activities in communities benefiting a wide range of emergency affected children. The long-term needs of child protection programmes should also be emphasised. Reintegration is a long-term process requiring a long-term commitment from States, supported or assisted by child protection actors and donors. Funding should be available for the time required to ensure full reintegration of children who have been recruited and reintegration programmes may be expected to extend over five years or more.

Please refer to **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion and **Foundation module 5** Advocacy for further information.

Girls and their children

At every stage in planning, designing and implementing activities related to prevention of recruitment, release and reintegration or protection, the needs of girls should be identified and actively provided for, even if girls are **invisible**. This must be sensitively done or there is a risk of increasing the stigma attached to their involvement and making their situation worse.

There are almost always significant numbers of girls associated with armed groups, and there are often girls associated with armed forces. Despite a growing awareness of the scale of involvement of girls and the extreme difficulties they can experience on return to their communities, programme responses are rarely effective. Whilst there are similarities between the circumstances and experiences of girls and boys, the situation for girls can be very different in relation to the manner in which they join armed forces or armed groups, the potential for their release, the effects that the experience of being in the armed force or group has on their physical, social and emotional wellbeing and the consequences this may have for their ability to reintegrate.

In Sierra Leone, girls formerly associated with armed actors are known as faded cotton, perceived as used and of little further use. Girls formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups across the region reported ongoing discrimination and are held responsible for high crime rates and indiscipline in schools. Discrimination was particularly severe for girls returning with babies. Girls returning to live with extended families also faced significant child protection issues, such that a number of them were driven to abandon the family.

'Girls formerly associated with armed groups and armed forces who did not go through formal demobilisation', Save the Children UK's experience in West Africa



The experience of girls, as with all children, can be very different. Some girls may feel empowered by their experience (but may have difficulty returning to their traditional roles) whilst others suffer harsh and brutal treatment, often over many years and return to societies where they are treated with contempt because of unsanctioned sexual relationships, pregnancy and inability to fetch a bride price. As can be seen from the example, girls in these situations face numerous problems on leaving armed forces; lack of education or livelihood options, marginalisation, and sexually transmitted diseases including for many the potential to develop HIV and AIDS. Some girls may resent having to leave their "husband" with whom they have an emotional bond and who may be the father of their child or children. Not surprisingly, some of these young people have been driven to thoughts of suicide.

Further information is provided on the specific needs of girls and ways to meet these in each topic. For agencies working in this area the development of pilot programmes, in consultation with those girls affected and including a participatory monitoring process, will enable a deeper understanding of how the rights of girls associated with armed forces or groups can be realised. The establishment of forums to share research outcomes and approaches is essential and research findings can often be found on agencies' websites. Further information can be found in the reading section at the end of this study material.

Pregnancy, young mothers and children born to girls associated with armed forces or armed groups

Many girls give birth during or after their time with an armed force or group. These girls and any surviving children require specific programmes at all stages to support the child mothers and their children. Common problems and concerns include the following.

- Pregnant girls may try to terminate the pregnancy through various, often unsafe means, or hide the fact that they are pregnant.
- Girls may suffer from reproductive health problems following complications during pregnancy or birth.
- Babies may be abandoned at birth and infanticide can occur.
- Young mothers may feel ambivalent about caring for children born in these circumstances.
- The family of girls who give birth may reject the girl, or the child they give birth to.
- Children born to girls associated with armed forces or armed groups may be rejected or stigmatised as they grow up.
- Children may suffer from health problems, neglect, or abuse.
- The father of the child or his family may try to reclaim the child.
- The legal status of these children eg. access to citizenship and refugee status, according to both domestic and international law, may not be clear.

Programmes should be designed to meet the physical, health and psychosocial needs of pregnant girls, young mothers and their children through involving the young girls themselves in designing interventions that meet their needs and those of their children. Release or demobilisation sites and interim care centres should provide



adequate facilities to accommodate pregnant girls or girl mothers as well as supplies such as birthing kits and a supportive and empathetic approach, allowing time for girls to consider their options for the future and options for the care of their children is essential. Reproductive healthcare should be available on release and provision made for this, if required, when children return home. These young girls and their children will be likely to require intensive support and follow up.

In areas with a high rate of HIV and AIDS planning should include the possibility for babies to become sick and follow up should address this.

The legal status of infants should be clarified; primarily, the national state where the child currently resides has responsibility for ensuring that the best interests of the child are protected. This will include registration at birth or as soon as possible afterwards, the child's right to their identity and family, the right not to be discriminated against, the right to nationality and the right to prevention of statelessness.

Forced terminations

The rights of girls associated with armed forces or armed groups are further violated in some contexts where girls who become pregnant are forced to have a termination during the time they are with the armed group. This can be very traumatic for girls who want to keep their babies, and physical complications can also occur as a result of procedures. Birth control measures are also forced on girls including insertion of intra uterine devices (IUDs) or contraceptive implants or injections. Girls in these circumstances need considerable support and reproductive healthcare assessment upon release.

'The worst thing is that you can't have a baby. Two years ago I got pregnant, they gave me an abortion, but they didn't tell me in advance they were going to do it. They told me they were checking on it. I wanted to have the baby.'

Human Rights Watch report on Colombia 2003

Girls associated with armed forces or armed groups are frequently subjected to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). This is not the case in all contexts but where this is occurring or has occurred agencies should lobby States to ensure that perpetrators of violence against girls associated with armed forces or groups, particularly sexual violence against children and women are prosecuted, either through national legislation or through the International Criminal Court. Organisations working with girls who have been subjected to SGBV must ensure their employees are fully trained and supervised in order to provide appropriate support.

Training material for this topic

- Exercise 1** Child associated with an armed force or armed group
- Exercise 2** Principles in working with children associated with armed forces or armed groups
- Handout 1** Definitions
- Handout 2** Scenario
- Handout 3** Six principles



Topic 2

The law and child rights

A rights-based approach; legal and normative framework relating to recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups

'I would like all the warlords to be brought to justice for bringing war and turning children's heads around to behaviours that are not acceptable in society.'

Young Liberian woman, forced to join National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) aged 10

Key learning points

- A child rights-based approach, meaning that all interventions are developed within a human rights framework, should underpin all actions to prevent recruitment, support the release and reintegration of children and provide protection.
- A child development perspective should inform all aspects of work with children associated with armed forces or groups. This should include recognising the individual capacities and resources of children in surviving and overcoming their difficulties.
- In addition to legal instruments, a range of non-binding standards or principles apply to the recruitment of children associated with armed forces or armed groups.
- Knowledge of national law, customary law and practices of communities is also very important for those working with children associated with armed forces or armed groups.
- An understanding of relevant law and standards is essential in order to lobby parties to the conflict and the international community to fulfil their legal responsibilities and also to guide the assistance and protection of children.

Rights-based approach

With this approach the principles of children's rights are used to design, implement and monitor programmes in order that:

- all children can fully enjoy their rights
- these rights are acknowledged and respected by the societies in which they live.

States have the primary responsibility for realising children's rights. However, they must also support others, especially parents or primary caregivers to make the changes that are needed so that children's rights are upheld.

Child rights programming emphasises three key areas

- 1 Accountability** Relating to the obligations of duty bearers The recruitment of children into armed forces or groups would not happen if duty bearers fulfilled their obligations towards children. A rights-based approach seeks to understand which duty bearers are failing in their obligations, why and what can be done; this may be family who depend on a child to earn an income or provide food through joining an armed group or the government who fail to protect children from abduction by rebel groups, or there may be a combination of factors, some of which may be easier to put right than others.



2 Participation Recognising children as the holders or subjects of rights Recruitment of children violates many of their rights, but their rights may not be fulfilled simply by removing them from an armed force or armed group; demobilising a child may force them to seek other high risk ways of earning an income, for example prostitution. Involving children in the design and implementation of programmes recognises their right to be heard and will help to ensure solutions fulfil other rights for example to an education and to live with their family.

3 Equity and non-discrimination Children's rights are universal Whatever their circumstances, ethnic group, gender, culture or background, children have equal rights. The recruitment of girls has not always been seen as a violation of their rights as they are often viewed as **wives** of armed actors. Girls who leave armed forces or groups are often discriminated against making reintegration much more difficult.

A rights-based approach, which addresses the above three key areas, is essential for long-term change to occur, for recruitment to be prevented and for those children who have been recruited to be able to reintegrate successfully.

Please refer to **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches for further information.

Child development

As well as recognising children as subjects of rights, it is essential to be informed by a child-development perspective. This means having knowledge of developmental stages and the many factors that impinge on the psychological, social and physical development of the growing child. Child development relates to the process of growth and maturation of the human individual. Crises such as armed conflict, forced migration or natural disasters can present a wide range of threats to children's development, which will be experienced by the child in different ways, depending on their age, stage of development and gender. It is particularly important to consider the way children's relationships with significant people have been affected as well as the direct effect on the child's evolving capacities. The way in which children react to such events can also be better understood from a child-development perspective, allowing more appropriate support to be provided.

Background reading on child development is useful as there are a number of different theoretical models of child development. However, it should be remembered that these models are context specific and whilst useful as a broad guide, there will be cultural variations.

Many children recruited by armed forces or armed groups spend their critical formative years in an environment that can have a profound effect on their development:

- separation from family and community
- ill treatment and abuse
- hardship and brutalisation
- alcohol and drug abuse
- sexual and gender based violence
- being forced to participate in atrocities may be part of their experience.

On the other hand, these young people may have experienced benefits:



- being part of a community
- protection from the armed group
- being respected or feared
- holding positions of power.

Girls may enjoy:

- escaping from their traditional roles
- developing a range of skills
- becoming leaders.

The experience of each young person will be different and the way in which their experiences manifest themselves will also be different. From a child development perspective, an understanding of the positive as well as the negative impacts is critical in order to support the child in their transition to civilian life.

Please refer to **Foundation module 1** Understanding childhoods for detailed information on child development.

What is meant by a legal and normative framework

This refers to the law (which is binding), standards and other provisions relevant to the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups and to their protection, release and reintegration. International treaties, such as covenants, charters, protocols and conventions are formal legal texts to which States choose to become parties. They are considered as **hard law**, because they create legal binding obligations. Other instruments, such as declarations, principles or rules, are non-binding on States, and are often referred to as **soft law**.

Armed groups may not consider themselves to be bound by international human rights treaties such as the CRC but they are subject to international humanitarian law, in particular Article 3 common to the four Geneva conventions, and Additional protocol 2 to the four Geneva conventions, of 1949. It is important to understand these distinctions when planning advocacy strategies. And even though armed groups cannot sign up to human rights law, there are a number of examples of agreements or formal plans of action based on human rights law. Depending on the context, these have been drawn up between parties including armed groups, UN missions, UNICEF and governments leading to the release and reintegration of children unlawfully recruited.

International humanitarian, human rights and refugee law provides the basis for all action to protect children associated with armed forces or armed groups. National law, customary law and local practices are also important and agencies should have some knowledge of national law concerning the protection of children and of the policies and mechanisms that exist for implementing it.

UN Security Council members have made important resolutions to give greater protection to children during armed conflict. UN Security Council Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) have repeatedly condemned and called for an end to the unlawful recruitment and use of children and led to the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism and of a working group to address violations of children's rights committed in times of armed conflict.



In addition to legal instruments, a range of non-binding standards or principles apply to the recruitment of children associated with armed forces or armed groups. In particular the Paris commitments and guiding principles on children associated with armed forces or armed groups (2007) were endorsed by 58 States at a conference held in Paris in 2007 and reiterate States' commitments on a broad range of protective measures for children.

The *Conclusion on children at risk*, adopted by UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom) in October 2007, provides operational guidance for States, UNHCR and other relevant agencies and partners on the protection of children affected by displacement and statelessness at heightened risk. Recognising their increased vulnerability, the conclusion outlines the main aspects of a comprehensive child protection system.

Details of other standards and principles relevant to children associated with armed forces or armed groups can be found in the reading list provided at the end of this module.

Whose responsibility?

States are the primary actors or duty bearers responsible for the protection of civilians and where states cannot meet all of their humanitarian responsibilities directly they are charged with enabling the provision of humanitarian action by impartial actors. Other duty bearers include: local government, a range of institutions such as schools, members of the community and the family or caregivers of a child.

Foundation module 2 Child rights-based approaches provides comprehensive guidance in relation to duty bearers as well as rights holders. This can be used to help map which duty bearers are responsible and plan appropriate interventions.

As a result of persistent advocacy over a number of years, significant advances have been made in the development of a more robust and comprehensive legal framework and standards in relation to children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The critical issue in preventing the recruitment of children and protecting those who have already been recruited lies in the implementation of these provisions.

What are the relevant legal standards? Why they are important?

This vast array of law, standards and other provisions; some of which relates to general protection of children and some of which relates very specifically to the problem of children's recruitment and use by armed forces or groups, can sometimes appear confusing or incomprehensible. A legal or political framework for action can also seem irrelevant to the practitioner, working directly with communities and children, and it is true that the problem of recruitment will not be solved only through the application of the law. However, it is important that agency staff is familiar with at least some aspects of relevant law and standards for two purposes.

1 As a basis for advocacy at all levels; with communities, State and non-State actors and the international community to fulfil their obligations and legal responsibilities: as well as advocating that States sign and ratify the Optional protocol to the CRC and other relevant instruments if they have not already done so, agencies should work closely with national governments to ensure standards are respected and reflected in international law. Whilst armed groups cannot sign up to international human rights law, informal agreements or commitments have been used at a local level to raise the recruitment age to 18 years or facilitate the release of children. An example of this



was the action plan signed by the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which was developed with UNICEF in 2003.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the government of Sri Lanka, local and international organisations met in Kilinochchi on the 10th and 11th April 2003, to agree on an action plan to address the needs and care of children affected by war in the north east. The workshop was jointly inaugurated by Mr. Sutha Thangan, Deputy Head of the LTTE political wing and Dr. John Gooneratne, Deputy Director General of the Secretariat for co-ordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) and was facilitated by UNICEF.

The workshop participants developed the operational aspects of the action plan to ensure and restore normalcy to children affected by war, including those children engaged in hazardous labour, street children, underage recruits and children seeking recruitment. The action plan was based on the guiding principles of the best interest of the child, of children being with their families and of adopting an integrated approach to programming for the welfare of children. It further spelled out the role of civil society in enhancing programme effectiveness and sustainability. The need to recognise cultural diversity and to ensure that all programmes were culturally appropriate was acknowledged. The assurance that all agencies involved in the action plan would maintain their neutrality in political, religious or ideological issues was reinforced.

'Government and LTTE agree on action plan for children' UNICEF 2003

States also have obligations under international law to try to prevent armed groups from recruiting or using children. Agencies can also advocate for funding and support to be made available to States and other actors who are willing to comply with international standards but do not have the capacity to implement them.

2 As a framework for their work and to guide the assistance and protection given to children, agencies should explore ways of making global standards more relevant to their day to day work and to the communities they work with.

Agencies need to understand the key provisions of international humanitarian law as it applies to State and non-State armed actors involved in conflict and those of international human rights law, in particular the CRC, as it applies to the country where they are working.

Those staff with a specific focus on work with children associated with armed forces or armed groups need to work from a solid knowledge base. For example, anyone involved in advocating for the release of children from armed forces or groups must be confident in their knowledge of what the law says and must be able to communicate this competently.

Other staff such as community workers helping children and communities prevent recruitment probably do not need to know what the law says in detail but should understand core principles. An understanding of local norms relating to child protection may be more relevant to field workers.



More specialised knowledge can be provided by legal advisers or experts from organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who can also provide training.

Aspects of the legal and normative framework can be used to help:

- protect all children affected by emergencies including those associated with armed forces or armed groups
- prevent the recruitment of children and their use in hostilities, and to secure their release from fighting forces
- re-integrate children with their family and community
- protect children in the justice system
- pursue and prosecute those responsible for recruitment of children.

Children, not soldiers Save the Children UK, 2001

What the law states in relation to:

the protection of children and the promotion of their rights

The CRC provides the core principles for protecting the rights of all children at all times. States have responsibility for implementing the CRC through their own national law, although the capacity of some States to do this may be limited. A number of the standards are particularly relevant to children associated with armed forces or armed groups or to the prevention of recruitment and use of children.

- Article 38 The protection of children in armed conflict
- Article 20 Protection of children without families
- Article 39 Recovery and social reintegration
- Articles 28 and 29 The right to education
- Article 37 Prohibition of torture and the deprivation of liberty
- Article 40 Treatment in the juvenile justice system

Refugee children

The 1951 Refugee convention outlines general protection in relation to children who cross international borders.

Internally displaced children

The Guiding principles on internal displacement (1998) should inform all programmes and actions on behalf of internally displaced children. Whilst the guiding principles are not legally binding they are a very important advocacy and programming tool.

the recruitment and use of children into armed forces and armed groups

The current position is as follows.

International law bans the recruitment and direct involvement in hostilities of any children less than 15 years old, into any form of armed force or armed group in any type of armed conflict, international or non-international (CRC Article 38 and the two additional protocols to the 1949 Geneva conventions). In other words, under no circumstances should government armed forces, informal armed forces such as



militias, civil defence or local defence forces, or opposing armed groups, have persons below the age of 15 years recruited or amongst their fighters.

Where national law sets an age higher than 15 years as the minimum age of recruitment, that higher age applies.

The CRC generally defines a child as any person under 18 years, but the above shows that a lower age applies in relation to recruitment and use of children in conflict. The 2000 Optional protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict helps to correct this anomaly. It raises the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities and compulsory recruitment to 18 years; requires that under no circumstances should armed groups recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 and requires State parties to take all feasible measures to criminalise such practices. It also calls on States to raise the minimum age and introduce strict safeguards for any voluntary military recruitment under 18. Some States do allow voluntary recruitment between 16 and 18 years but most do not. Commonly referred to as the Optional protocol (OP), this is a very important advocacy tool and national and international efforts to persuade States to sign and ratify this are ongoing.

Other human rights treaties protect children from recruitment.

- The ILO Convention no. 182 on the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which defines forced and compulsory recruitment of children in armed conflict as one of the worst forms of child labour (and defines children as under 18 years).
- The Rome statute of the International Criminal Court, which states that conscripting or enlisting children less than 15 years old into national armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in all kinds of hostilities, is a war crime.
- The Guiding principles on internal displacement, (1998) which state that in no circumstances shall displaced children be recruited nor be required or permitted to take part in hostilities.

Regional instruments and initiatives are also very important in relation to prevention of recruitment.

- The African charter on the rights and welfare of the child, which is legally binding for the countries which have ratified it, establishes the age of 18 as the minimum age for recruitment and participation in any armed force or armed group.
- Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on the commitments for children in ASEAN 2001.
- The adoption of Guidelines on children and armed conflict by the European Union in 2003 and the implementation strategy for the guidelines agreed in January 2006.
- Resolution 1904 of the Organization of American States in 2002.

Security Council resolutions (see above) provide important benchmarks for policy and programmes and agencies need to know what they say and should be able to cite them when advocating particularly at an international level, for example when lobbying for resources to support the release and reintegration of children.



the question of age in relation to recruitment

Most States have signed up to a minimum age of 18 years for voluntary and compulsory recruitment. While recognising that States may have different obligations under international law, the majority of child protection actors will continue to advocate for States to raise the minimum age of recruitment to 18 in all circumstances. This is sometimes known as the **straight 18** position.

the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups

A number of articles of the CRC are relevant to the reintegration of children (see above under protection). In addition Article 4(3) of Additional protocol 2 to the 1949 Geneva convention states that children (under 15) who have '*taken a direct part in hostilities*' should not be excluded from the provisions of care due to all children affected by conflict, these include family reunification and education. The importance of providing education is also emphasised in the Guiding principles on internal displacement (Principle 23) and in Additional protocol 2 to the 1949 Geneva conventions (Article 4).

the treatment of children in the justice system

The International Criminal Court has no jurisdiction over children. In other words no one who is alleged to have committed a crime when they were under 18 years can be prosecuted by any international court or tribunal. National law may still apply in such cases and there are a number of specific legal provisions for the protection of children and their proper treatment within justice mechanisms including truth seeking and reconciliation mechanisms.

CRC Article 40 states that judicial proceedings against children should be avoided wherever possible and sets out minimum standards for children accused of infringements of the law. Other articles of the CRC are particularly relevant (see above under protection). Agencies also need to be familiar with the UN Standard minimum rules for the administration of juvenile justice (the Beijing rules) 1985, UN Rules for the protection of juveniles deprived of their liberty 1990, and the International covenant on civil and political rights 1976 (Articles 6 and 10).

CRC Article 37 states that '*capital punishment or imprisonment for life without possibility of release shall never be used against any person who is proved to have committed an offence against international or domestic criminal law while under 18 years of age.*'

The position¹ agreed by most child protection actors is that children who are accused of crimes under international law allegedly committed while they were associated with armed forces or groups should be considered primarily as victims of offences against international law and children should not be punished or prosecuted solely for their membership of an armed force or armed group.

Alternatives to judicial processes should be sought for children in a framework of restorative justice and social rehabilitation; all such children are entitled to be treated in accordance with international standards for juvenile justice. If national judicial proceedings do take place, children are entitled to the highest standards of safeguards available according to international law and standards and every effort should be made to seek alternatives to placing children in institutions.



the prosecution of those responsible for recruitment of children

Ending impunity for those responsible for recruiting or using children in armed conflict, and the existence of mechanisms to hold such individuals to account can serve as a powerful deterrent against such violations. The Rome statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), states that conscripting or enlisting children under 15 years into national armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in all kinds of hostilities is a war crime. Agencies should advocate for the ratification of the ICC by all States and for States to adopt its provisions in national law.

Special provisions will protect children as victims and witnesses (Article 43(6) and Article 68(1 and 2)) and all measures should be taken to protect the rights of child witnesses and victims who may be called upon to provide evidence.

Please refer to **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches for further information on rights dimensions including full discussion relating to rights, responsibilities, duty bearers and the legal framework and **Foundation module 5 Advocacy** for detailed guidance on using advocacy as a tool to promote the fulfilment of children's rights.

Monitoring and reporting human rights abuses

Mechanisms for monitoring and reporting recruitment and other human rights violations against children affected by conflict are an essential aspect of protection work with children and should be established, where possible, through the task force (see box below). These should be linked to, support and develop community efforts to prevent the recruitment or use of children by armed forces or groups and facilitate community-based outreach strategies. The information collected through monitoring and reporting serves as the basis for actions to pressure armed actors to respect international standards and to end impunity for those who do not.

Pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the Secretary General, UNICEF and the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for children affected by armed conflict (SRSG CAAC) are tasked with a lead role in the implementation of a mechanism for monitoring and reporting of recruitment or use of children and other egregious violations against children in armed conflict. They are tasked with working alongside UN peacekeeping forces and UN country teams. They act in collaboration with governments, local and international NGOs, civil society actors and other partners. In each country where children and armed conflict is an issue, a task force on monitoring and reporting will be constituted. The country-level task force on monitoring and reporting will be co-chaired by the Deputy SRSG and UNICEF Representative in situations where a UN peacekeeping mission is in place or by the UNICEF Representative and other UNCT members where appropriate in situations without a peacekeeping mission. All monitoring reports should be submitted through the SRSG or the resident coordinator to the office of the SRSG for children and armed conflict and copied to UNICEF HQ.

The Paris commitments and guiding principles on children associated with armed forces or armed groups



There are many challenges in establishing an effective system that is able to respond to child rights violations and is not just a repository for information. The framework that now exists through the task force outlined above provides an opportunity for agencies to work together and address the challenges involved which include ethical considerations, confidentiality and potential risks, to the affected community and to staff, in particular national staff. Further information on monitoring and reporting can be found on <http://ochaonline.un.org> and in the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Another way of reporting concerns relating to violations of children's rights is through reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In addition to the report submitted by the State, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasises the importance of information from NGOs both through contributing to the report submitted by the State but also through the submission of an independent report written by NGOs. This should be submitted within one year of a State report on a particular country and is likely to have more weight if it is written by a coalition of NGOs. Guidelines for writing and submitting these reports can be found on the website of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.²

Training material for this topic

- Exercise 1** Quiz on the legal and normative framework
- Handout 1** Questions
- Handout 2** Legal texts on children associated with armed forces or armed groups
- Handout 3** The Paris commitments



Topic 3

Assessment and situation analysis

Understanding the reasons for recruitment

'Big people always start wars that children know nothing about. Then they always put children in the middle of war.'

15-year-old girl from Liberia

Key learning points

- Children are recruited into armed forces or armed groups for many different reasons and as a result of different underlying causes.
- Situation analysis is critical in order to understand the precise interplay of factors relating to recruitment in any situation and develop strategies that respond to these factors, and should include: a gender analysis, analysis of power dynamics and the motivation of those recruiting children.
- Where possible a child rights situation analysis (CRSA) should be undertaken which considers all the rights children are not enjoying, including protection from recruitment. This should be carried out within the context of a broader situation analysis relating to the emergency and humanitarian response.

A CRSA utilises the normative framework of the principles and provisions established in the 41 substantive articles of the CRC and other related human rights instruments as its point of reference for standards to achieve, and as guidance to methodologies used. A CRSA is broken down into:

1 assessment which looks at **what** is happening:

- which children are not enjoying which rights?
- are things getting better or worse?
- who are the key stakeholders?
- what are they able to do?
- what are the causes?

2 analysis which looks at **why** this is happening:

- what is the situation of duty bearers?
- do they have the capacity, resources and motivation to protect children?
- do those affected know how to claim their rights?
- are those affected able to claim their rights?

In a rights-based approach analytical tools are used to explore the functioning of the rights holder and duty bearer relationship, and produce information that helps clarify where this can be improved. Good analysis is an important input into the process of decision making.

In an emergency situation the analysis may need to be incremental, that is it may be necessary to continue building on information as circumstances permit, and to repeat



the analysis as the situation is likely to be fluid and changing. Agencies should try to collaboratively decide what level of analysis is possible; cooperation, sharing information, frameworks for analysis and skills and building on existing knowledge are all critical to success.

Risk mapping can be used as part of the situation analysis. This is an exercise that aims to pinpoint particular risks, for example, girls going into the bush to collect firewood are commonly abducted by armed groups. If such a risk is identified it may be possible to work with the community to identify preventative measures.

The situation analysis should be preceded by a **risk analysis** (see **Foundation module 3** Programme design, **Section 3**) which considers risk in relation to the affected children and their families and community and risk to humanitarian actors. As well as physical threats related to working in conflict, recruitment can be a very politically sensitive area. Staff working for humanitarian agencies has in the past been targeted and agencies threatened with expulsion for speaking out or acting on recruitment issues. Agencies will need to work closely with their security advisers and colleagues in order to decide if and how work relating to children associated with armed forces or armed groups can be accomplished safely. In some acute crises or situations, for example where the national government is involved in recruitment or allows it to happen and is highly sensitive to criticism, a watching brief or discrete monitoring activities may be all that is possible until the situation improves.

Collecting and analysing information represents an intervention in itself and agency staff must act in accordance with humanitarian and human rights principles, behave in an ethical way and ensure they do no harm. In many circumstances there will be an abundance of existing information; use this as a basis and try to avoid repeating or duplicating assessments. It is essential to involve those affected: children, their families and communities in all phases and to provide them with feedback and information relating to outcomes. Both qualitative and quantitative information is required; in some circumstances quantitative data may be hard to gather and, at least initially, responses may have to be based on qualitative information, for example people's perception that economic necessity is driving young people to voluntarily join armed groups.

Tools for carrying out CRSA

There are many ways of structuring or understanding what is happening, why it is happening and what needs to be done. One way is through a causal analysis which breaks down the problem in the following way:

- the immediate causes
- the underlying causes
- the root or structural causes.

The following section demonstrates how the key factors leading to recruitment can be organised in this way. The factors and the interplay between factors is different in each context which is why situation analysis is so important. Also, as can be seen below the division between immediate, underlying and root causes may be blurred, for example, lack of birth registration, which may be immediately responsible for recruitment, could also be considered as an underlying cause. However, organising the factors in the following way can help to see why so many children are caught up in



adult's wars and to distinguish between the immediately obvious causes, and the underlying and **root** reasons. Dealing with the immediate cause can provide a solution to the problem in the short term but unless the underlying and **root** reasons are understood and addressed, any positive change is unlikely to be sustainable, possibly leading to re-recruitment of children.

Factors leading to recruitment

Immediate causes

- Compulsory or voluntary military service in the national armed forces where the age of recruitment is under 18 years.
- Forced recruitment into armed forces or armed groups through the use of:
 - **abduction** often in violent and brutal circumstances eg. during raids on villages
'There was nothing we could have done to stop them making us join... there was terror everywhere. They killed people like chickens, set others on fire and ordered the rest of us to go with them.'
Zimmi, Sierra Leone, forced to join the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), aged 8
 - **press-gang** physical force may be used to coerce children to enlist
 - **quota systems** are often imposed where families are required to provide a specified number of men or children. They may make a choice to provide a son where the father is more economically important.
- Lack of documents providing evidence of age.
- Children may also join armed forces or groups voluntarily. However, the concept of **voluntary** recruitment must be seen within the context of children's lives. Many argue that where the **choice** is made through a desire for revenge or protection or as a means of finding food, the term voluntary should not be applied. Children also lack a real understanding of the meaning of war, so they may be attracted by the apparent glamour, power and prestige. The desire of adolescents to be **cool** through belonging to a group or having certain clothes or accessories can be readily exploited. Children who admitted to joining for these reasons were rapidly disillusioned.
- Motivation of those recruiting children:
as the following example shows, children can be useful in combat:
'I was in the front lines the whole time I was with the [opposition force]. I used to be assigned to plant mines in areas the enemy passed through. They used us for reconnaissance and other things like that because if you're a child the enemy doesn't notice you much; nor do the villagers.'
Child formally associated with armed forces or armed groups, in Burma (Myanmar)³
 - children may be seen as the best fighters with greater traditional powers due to their **purity**
 - children may be used to fight against their own communities as part of **terror tactics** or to bring about the breakdown of communities
 - a need for manpower, especially in chronic conflict
 - children are more likely to work for food, security and status rather than wages.



Underlying causes

- Economic necessity is a key determinant in many contexts; a study undertaken by Save the Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) showed that 61% of 300 children interviewed said their family had no income. This level of desperation is easily exploited by recruiters.
- Lack of access to school or skills training; conversely the ability of children to attend school or learn skills has been shown to be a key factor in preventing recruitment.
- Lack of protection by governments who are unable to prevent abduction. For example, children were abducted by the Lords Resistance Army for many years in Uganda.
- Political ideology, or in some cases religious fundamentalism can be exploited by military leaders. Children who join religious schools or military academies may be recruited into armed forces or armed groups.
- Targeting of civilians *'because the rebels killed your parents, it burns up your heart'* was how a 16-year-old girl who had joined an armed group expressed this.

Root or structural causes

- Breakdown in the main forms of child protection, family, community and institutions; Children living in conflict zones or occupied territories, children who are separated from family, refugees or displaced or living or working on the streets are extremely vulnerable to recruitment. Children living in extended or foster families can also be at greater risk of recruitment. Adolescents are generally more likely to be recruited.

Mariama was 12 when her village in Sierra Leone was attacked and she fled with her family, becoming separated in the bush. When she returned to search for her parents she was captured by the RUF. She spent two years with the forces before managing to escape... she then travelled to Liberia to search for family but was held captive by CDF forces who knew she had previously fought with the RUF. She was finally reunited with her father but thrown out of the family home when she became pregnant.

Fighting back Save the Children Fund⁴

- Sustained exposure to violence, girls who joined armed groups in Colombia saw this as a way of escaping the violence they experienced in society and their homes.
- Traditional beliefs about the role of boys as fighters; in some societies male adolescents are expected to protect and provide for family.
- Family association with armed groups; many children grow up in militarised communities where there is blurring between community members and members of armed groups. Children are more likely to become involved in fighting where there is strong support from family and community. Children are also born into armed groups when their mothers are combatants.

Further tools, including one for mapping responsibilities and one for a capacity gap analysis are included in **Foundation module 3** Programme design, **Section 3**. For guidance on ensuring the active involvement of children see **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion.



Training material for this topic

- Exercise 1** Factors that make children vulnerable to recruitment
- Exercise 2** Recruitment drama
- Exercise 3** Recruitment of children
- Exercise 4** How do children become actively involved in armed conflict?
- Exercise 5** Situation analysis relating to prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups
- Handout 1** Notes for recruiters
- Handout 2** Notes for displaced persons
- Handout 3** Case studies
- Handout 4** Reasons and approaches for recruitment
- Handout 5** Discussion questions
- Handout 6** Scenario and areas for analysis



Topic 4

Planning and implementation

Implementation strategies: prevention of and response to recruitment

'My father and my uncles built a place deep in the forest for us to hide. They kept food there and some clothes and other things to use for cooking while we were hiding in the forest. They always told us that if anything happens, this is where we should go.'
17-year-old who resisted joining fighting forces in Liberia.⁵

Key learning points

- Where there is evidence of recruitment, or the potential for this to take place, urgent actions should always be taken to prevent recruitment.
- A prevention strategy should include: the application of relevant law and standards, practical measures to improve children's safety and programming to prevent recruitment within a broad child protection framework.
- The prevention strategy should be designed in consultation with children, families and communities. It should build on and develop the children's, their families' and their communities' own actions to prevent recruitment.
- The release of children must be sought at all times, even during ongoing conflict and should not be dependent on any parallel release or demobilisation process for adults.
- Where children are demobilised as part of a formal DDR process special provision must be made for them.
- The objective of the release or demobilisation process is the integration or reintegration of children and their active participation in planning and implementing processes is a critical element in promoting their recovery and reintegration.

Where there is evidence of child recruitment, or the potential for this to take place, an emergency response effort must address the protection needs of those who have been recruited or are at risk of being so. A prevention strategy should respond to the immediate reasons for recruitment and the underlying and root causes which are likely to be context specific (see **Topic 3**). The first step in any prevention strategy is a situation analysis. This should be informed by an understanding of the issues in **Topic 3** and should seek to identify which children are most at risk of recruitment, when this is likely to happen, the methods used, who is doing the recruiting and what their motivation is as well as what children and communities are doing to prevent recruitment. A gender analysis should be included and given that recruitment often has a regional dimension this should also be considered.

Developing a plan for prevention

Successful prevention requires a collaborative set of actions to be taken at different levels which are inclusive of a range of actors; agencies need to work together to develop a strategic approach and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities. The level of implementation for each agency will depend upon their mandate, capacity, resources including funding and expertise and may involve advocacy, capacity building



or direct service delivery. Complementarity, cooperation and transparency are key to developing a coherent and comprehensive response; no one agency or organisation can do everything. In countries where there is a cluster system, a child protection sub cluster would be the logical mechanism for coordinating. Otherwise, a child protection coordination group should be established if this does not already exist and local and international organisations should be strongly encouraged to participate. This sub cluster or working group can be a forum for mapping out where there are gaps in capacity and why, what needs to be done and who is best placed to do this.

Foundation module 3 Programme design provides further information on practical tools that can be used to facilitate this process. This approach applies equally to programme activities related to release and reintegration.

National governments, armed forces and armed groups, peacekeeping forces and humanitarian actors all need to be included in the prevention strategy and advocacy messages need to be clear and consistent.

Advocacy

Advocacy is always needed to provide a voice for children in emergencies, to ensure that responses are appropriate to children's needs and rights, and to ensure that humanitarian principles are respected. Advocacy cannot replace other response strategies but can help to increase the breadth of available mechanisms for strengthening response. Advocacy can also serve to complement and strengthen humanitarian response, helping to increase protection for children and prevent further risks.

Advocacy for governments or other relevant authorities to fulfil their responsibilities to protect children should underpin all work related to children associated with armed forces or armed groups. Agencies should continually convey the message that this is a humanitarian rather than a political or military issue.

The **Three pillars** model of children's rights programming uses evidence and experience drawn from direct activities (the first pillar) to inform and influence changes in policy, legislation and structures (the central pillar). This process is most effectively undertaken by a strong and mobilised civil society that actively includes children and young people (the third pillar).

Working through the child protection sub cluster or coordination group, agencies should agree on how they can work together to advocate for children in emergencies. Some agencies may have particular expertise in this area whilst others may wish to focus more on service delivery or capacity building. Collaboration amongst agencies will facilitate the use of the three pillars model and is likely to lead to a more effective response overall. Agencies working in a country or region should try to develop a joint advocacy strategy involving those, from the local to the international level, who may have influence over the armed forces or armed groups.

Foundation module 5 Advocacy provides detailed guidance on the use of advocacy in emergencies.

Elements of a prevention strategy

- The application of relevant law and standards by governments or other relevant authorities.



- Practical measures to improve children's safety.
- Programming to prevent recruitment.

These actions should respond to findings in the situation analysis and build on and develop what communities are already doing. For further information see **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion and **Foundation module 6** Community mobilisation.

- Include children and adults in the community at all stages of designing and implementing prevention activities.
- Emphasise the need to support the efforts of children, families and communities to prevent recruitment.
- Establish effective coordination mechanisms.
- Ensure representation to, negotiations and contact with armed groups and armed forces are coordinated, transparent and strategic.
- Regularly re-evaluate risk and analyse the situation.

For an example of approaches and lessons learned in preventing recruitment see **Handout 4**.

The application of relevant law and standards

Advocacy for governments or other relevant authorities to fulfil their responsibilities to protect children should underpin prevention work. Agencies should continually convey the message that the prevention of recruitment is a humanitarian rather than a political or military issue.

Topic 2 outlined the legal framework and standards relating to children associated with armed forces or armed groups. Those advocating to prevent recruitment will need to be familiar with the national law of the country concerned, international provisions relating to recruitment and how these apply to both armed forces and armed groups. Regional initiatives are likely to be very important and agencies should ensure they are familiar with those relevant to the area they are working in.

Advocacy should take place at the local, national and international levels and is more likely to be effective using the Three Pillars model described above and in **Foundation module 5** Advocacy. For example, the following initiatives are likely to have a greater impact when based on evidence or data relating to recruitment or programme activities which seek to prevent recruitment and involve local communities in defining the goal of advocacy and where possible and safe, participating in initiatives. These are some of the initiatives agencies can undertake.

- Advocate for States to sign, ratify and incorporate into national law the 2000 Optional protocol to the CRC.
- Advocate for States, international humanitarian and human rights actors, religious groups and others to use all means of communication to disseminate the message that recruitment and use of children in conflict is unacceptable.
- Advocate for measures to control the supply of small arms and light weapons.



- Invite the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for children and armed conflict to visit the country and meet with appropriate members of the government, military or armed groups.
- Engage those who may be able to influence the conduct of the forces and groups responsible; religious leaders, parents, civil society or community leaders, human rights groups, government officials, military personnel or opposition leaders.
- Advocate for physical protection to be provided to children and communities during armed conflict and for respect for humanitarian and human rights principles.
- Provide information to and raise awareness of law and standards with local communities, leaders, influential people as well as armed actors: agencies can translate and disseminate relevant materials relating to law and standards, facilitate public meetings and provide training. Materials can be presented in child friendly ways so that children are fully informed.
- Advocacy can involve working with the media where the risk analysis shows this can be done safely. Ethical guidelines such as the UNICEF Media guidelines, guidelines for ethical reporting, should guide all actions.
- Make contact with armed groups for the purposes of advocacy and training, where this can be done safely and transparently, preferably in collaboration or coordination with other actors.

Challenges

There are particular challenges in relation to the implementation of age restrictions for recruitment. Birth registration is a universal right for children but many countries lack the capacity for a national birth registration system. Establishing proof of age by other means, such as cross checking with other persons and medical screening, are not dependable procedures and are open to corruption. The burden of proof should be on the recruiters to prove compliance with legal standards rather than on the child to prove their age, so if there is any doubt, the recruiters should presume the person is under 18 years. Even when states sign up to commitments relating to prevention of underage recruitment, establishing the procedures and measures for implementation at a national level is beyond the capacity of most countries affected by conflict. Appeals for the international community to develop the capacity of States to apply legal and other standards should be part of the advocacy strategy.

Practical measures to improve children's safety

Steps can and should be taken even in the midst of an emergency situation to improve the safety of children and reduce their vulnerability to recruitment. Local initiatives should be supported and developed where these are in the best interests of those children affected.

- Support and develop local initiatives to prevent family separations and prevent recruitment. Find out what people are doing themselves and what support they need to make these strategies more effective. In conflict prone areas, promote the formation of child protection committees where children and adults can work together to develop strategies, and the formation of youth groups.



Research on community action to prevent recruitment in West Africa showed that a key strategy employed by families was to move their children to a place of greater safety when attacks were imminent. The research identified a number of areas where agencies could support these actions; in providing training about prevention of separation, in helping to establish better mechanisms for communication within communities, helping with risk assessment and assisting in the safe and organised movement of populations. Agencies also have a role in lobbying for IDP and refugee camps to be protected.

Fighting back Save the Children⁶

In Sri Lanka, the reviewer was told of two occasions where mothers had grouped together to force recruiters from the fighting forces to leave the community and on another occasion parents had joined together and entered a school when recruiters had entered whilst classes were being taught.

Review of underage recruitment Save the Children in Sri Lanka, 2006

- Engage in dialogue with communities over prevention strategies that may not be in children's best interest. Early marriage has been used in Sri Lanka as a means of preventing the recruitment of girls and this may be against the wishes of the girls. Other children, especially boys, are sent out of the country to prevent recruitment, which may bring risks of a different kind. It may be possible to identify alternative strategies or mitigate potential harm.
- Work with government departments to provide better protection to children through development and implementation of policy, for example registration of births and policy that supports family unity. This may not be feasible during an acute crisis but relationships with relevant government ministries can be initiated.
- Deploy and maintain international staff in conflict areas where this is feasible. The presence of international agencies and international staff has been shown to have a deterrent effect on recruitment.
- Carry out monitoring and reporting. See **Topic 2** for further information.

Please refer to **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches and **Foundation module 5** Advocacy for further information.

Programming to prevent recruitment

Programmes to prevent recruitment should address factors that may encourage the involvement of children in armed forces or groups within a broad child protection framework and should provide viable alternatives to recruitment for all children. Programmes need to address the **push** factors, such as poverty, lack of education or ill treatment at home, and the **pull** factors including promises of money, the desire for a gun and uniform and simple curiosity.

A community-based protection model

The combination of community mobilisation through committee based structures, livelihoods interventions and child focused training and awareness raising has the potential for a significant impact on the community. By addressing domestic child



protection issues (including, neglect, domestic violence, alcoholism and poverty) and supporting families' abilities for sustainable livelihoods, SCiSL can make a significant contribution to the prevention of voluntary recruitment and re-recruitment by improving children's situations at home and ensuring families are able to care and provide for their children.

Review of underage recruitment Save the Children in Sri Lanka, 2006

Family unity

Children who are not living with family, who are orphaned or abandoned are extremely vulnerable to recruitment as is demonstrated in the following example from Myanmar.

Ye Nyunt: the **Brave Sprouts**

Another source of recruits to the army is the Ye Nyunt system, which directly translates as **Brave Sprouts**. Often referred to as a youth organisation, in reality Ye Nyunt is a network of camps for orphans and other boys run by the army.

'They sent me to a special place in their army camp called Ye Nyunt. At the IB 54 camp there are a hundred Ye Nyunt boys, aged from four up to sixteen. They gather boys who are orphans and care for them in the camp. They sent some to the school they have there.'

Human Rights Watch Report⁷

Prevention of family separation and early identification, protection and reunification programmes

The family and community generally provide the most effective protection for children and programmes to prevent separation are essential to preventing recruitment. One third of children interviewed in a study in West Africa had been recruited shortly after becoming separated from family. These children had previously been living in a stable family situation. Initiatives that have proved effective in past emergencies include the following.

- Working with children and communities to develop prevention activities. For example:
 - teaching young children their family name and place of origin
 - providing name tags
 - teaching older children to take responsibility for younger ones
 - ensuring all family members know how to contact one another if separated
 - if families choose to send children away for their protection, this is done in their best interests.
- Work with governments and humanitarian actors to develop a preparedness plan around prevention of separation and emergency care that promotes and supports family unity including procedures on evacuation and develops the capacity to carry out urgent reunification programmes.



See **Critical issue module 6** Separated children for more information on preventing separation.

- Children living with their family in highly militarised communities are very vulnerable to recruitment and in these circumstances, prevention work involves addressing the attitudes of family and community that allow or even promote children's involvement. Every opportunity should be sought to highlight the dangers and negative consequences of children's involvement to family, community and government. The voice of children can be very powerful in delivering these messages, as long as this can be done safely and without presenting a risk to the children.

'I will not go back because the first time, God spared my life. Maybe the next time I will die. There is nothing good in war for children. Some go back to their families crippled or half crazy because of the drugs they used. I will not go back and I don't want to be part of it again.'

12-year-old girl from Liberia

Ending poverty and securing livelihoods

Economic and livelihood opportunities: poverty and lack of livelihood opportunities are a major factor in the recruitment of children. If children and families are to resist recruitment these needs must be met in alternative and less risky ways. In areas where this is an underlying cause a long-term strategy is needed to develop sustainable economic alternatives for children. Urgent action is required to:

- provide relief aid to prevent hunger; ensure all households have access to basic relief supplies and other services
- put measures in place to prevent family separation being inadvertently caused through the distribution of relief aid
- advocate for long-term livelihood support.

'I thought that if I left home, my mother and brothers would be fewer and would eat better.'

Child combatant in Colombia⁸

Education and vocational training programmes

Education provides opportunities to learn and can equip children with skills and competence and enable them to meet some of their own needs. Education also keeps children occupied and builds hope for the future; children and their families believe education is a key determinant in preventing recruitment.

'I had my children go to school and I used to talk to them all the time about the importance of education. They promised me they were not going to join and they did not.'

Mother of several children who did not join armed groups in Liberia⁹

Agencies can play a key role in providing or advocating for the urgent provision of education including life skills and relevant vocational training for older children in emergencies.

- Education should be free and accessible to all children.
- Measures must be taken to prevent propaganda or active recruitment taking place and to protect children in the school environment.
- Informal education and recreational opportunities including children's or youth clubs are a way of supporting healthy child development and preventing recruitment.



For more information see **Critical issue module 2** Education.

Children's clubs in Sri Lanka provided a sense of normality for the children who have a say in the activities provided. These include drama, music and sports for boys and girls, as well as yoga. Mobile children's clubs linked to the permanent ones have been developed for displaced communities; these include a library in a suitcase taken around by bicycle. In a culture where educational attainment is very important, the clubs also help support education for displaced children.

Save the Children UK

Prevention of recruitment or use of refugee and internally displaced children

Displacement makes children (refugees or internally displaced) particularly vulnerable to recruitment, whether in camps, host communities or families or in urban situations. These children are likely to have reduced social protection and coping mechanisms and less economic, educational or other opportunities because of their displacement.

Camps for displaced persons, whether refugee or internally displaced, are also vulnerable to infiltration by combatants and children can be easily recruited. International law and standards places responsibility on States to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons at all times and to provide protection, if necessary with the assistance of the international community, for example through the deployment of peacekeeping forces. There are also standards pertaining to the setting of camps, which should be at least 50 kilometres from an international border. Agencies working in camps can help to prevent recruitment through:

- monitoring and reporting of recruitment (see above)
- providing viable alternatives to joining armed forces and armed groups for children and adolescents:
 - educational and vocational programmes
 - income generating activities
 - access to livelihood opportunities
- supporting child protection mechanisms with an emphasis on raising awareness of children's rights.

Preventing the recruitment or use of girls

General prevention strategies apply to girls as well as to boys. To ensure their effectiveness girls should be included in the design, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

- Interventions should seek to promote gender equality and freedom of choice for girls in line with international standards.
- Specific issues relating to gender based violence, early marriage or other harmful practices may need to be addressed depending on the context.

'When I was twelve a cousin raped me. I was so mad that I wanted vengeance.'

This young girl's anger was the motivation for her to join the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army FARC-EP in Colombia.¹⁰



- Girls may be particularly vulnerable to forced recruitment if specific protection is not provided, for example, when girls are collecting firewood in conflict areas. The situation analysis should highlight such risks.

For further guidance on developing programmes which build on and involve communities, including children, please refer to **Foundation module 6** Community mobilisation and **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion.

Release or demobilisation from armed forces or armed groups

'I grew tired of seeing so many friends killed. It was four lost years, four years without a family.'

Former child combatant in Colombia.¹¹

The release of children, girls and boys, from armed groups or armed forces should be sought at all times, even during ongoing conflict, as long as this does not place the children at greater risk. This means that as soon as it is apparent that children have been or will be recruited, planning for programmes to support their release and reintegration should begin.

How children leave armed forces or armed groups

- Demobilisation as part of a peace process
- Demobilisation as part of a cease-fire agreement
- Demobilisation after serving for a period of time
- Release during conflict, often as the result of advocacy or direct negotiations by external organisations
- Escaping, which the armed group or force may see as 'desertion'
- Capture by an opposing armed force or armed group
- Being handed over or abandoned by an armed force or group. For example, children with disabilities or who are sick.

Protection of children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups

All children who leave armed forces or groups in any of the ways outlined above retain their human rights as children and relevant international law and standards must be applied. Agencies should ensure they are familiar with these standards so they are able to advocate if children's rights have been or are likely to be violated. For example, children captured by armed forces or groups may be detained, beaten, kicked or tortured as a punishment or to elicit information; children may even be summarily executed or sentenced to death for desertion. Urgent action must be taken to try to persuade armed forces or groups to hand over children to a civilian authority as soon as they are captured.

Children who have been unlawfully recruited should not be considered as deserters under applicable national law. Girls and any children they have given birth to face particular protection problems and the legal status of the children will need to be urgently clarified.



Actions to promote or secure the release of children from armed forces or armed groups

Agencies can take the following actions.

- **Advocate for release of children from armed forces or armed groups**
Where possible a coordinated advocacy strategy should be developed with the objective of securing the release and reintegration of all children, with a particular focus on girls. As well as advocating with armed groups or forces responsible for recruitment advocacy should begin with the communities from which children were recruited or to which they will return.
- **Advocate for peace agreements to include specific provision** (including funding and other resources) for the needs of children including the particular needs of girls and any children they have or will have as a result of their association with an armed force or armed group. These peace agreements should include all children associated with armed forces or armed groups, not only the children carrying arms or having participated actively in fighting.
- **Obtain information and build on local knowledge** Children who have already been released will be able to provide information and insights, which may help in facilitating the release of more children, as well as developing a deeper understanding of the situation and needs of those children. Local communities, organisations or religious groups may also have significant knowledge of how release may be supported.
- **Make contact with armed groups to negotiate the release of children**
Agencies with the understanding and capacity to do so safely may be able to negotiate the release of children directly from armed forces. NGOs and UN agencies with a long-standing presence in communities and good local knowledge and relationships have been able to negotiate releases in this way.

In all contact with armed groups:

- rigorous adherence to the principles of neutrality and impartiality are essential
- actors must adopt a coordinated and transparent approach in order to agree on a common strategy and ensure consistent communications. It can be helpful for one agency to take a lead role when making contact with armed groups
- dialogue and negotiations should take place without media coverage
- formal agreements should be sought, and should include mechanisms to monitor implementation
- training and capacity-building on obligations under international law relating to the recruitment of children should be provided
- training provided to armed groups should include monitoring and evaluating mechanisms to assess impact.

The Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups



More detailed information on working with armed groups can be found in *Children, not soldiers* Save the Children UK

Ground rules

One of the best-known agreements with a non-State armed actor is the Agreement on ground rules, devised by Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) southern sector, as a way of structuring its relationship with rebel groups in south Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) was involved in drafting [the Agreement on ground rules] and it was signed by both the head of the SPLA and that of OLS southern sector. It contains a statement of support for humanitarian principles such as neutrality and impartiality, as well as more detailed rules. Importantly, it also contains a statement of support for the Geneva conventions and the CRC. This gave OLS the opening to discuss with the movement issues of abuse of international law, such as the recruitment of children associated with armed forces or armed groups. It thus introduced a rights element into a relationship that had hitherto been dominated by the provision of relief.

Children, not soldiers Save the Children UK

For further guidance on using the legal framework and advocating for the release of children from armed forces or armed groups and for their protection, please refer to **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches and **Foundation module 5** Advocacy.

Planning for the release or demobilisation of children

Planning must incorporate actions to be taken for children who go through a release or demobilisation process and those who go home directly and include specific measures to encourage and facilitate the release of girls.

Whether the release is part of a UN implemented and monitored peace process or a directly negotiated release of a discrete group of children, the following principles should apply.

- The objective is to enable children to play an active role as civilian members of society, integrated into the community and where possible living with family.
- Appeals for funding to support the reintegration phase as well as release should begin immediately. Interagency appeals may be more effective, and the requirement for long-term funding, as well as the need to ensure programming addresses the needs of all conflict-affected children, must be emphasised.
- Early and ongoing engagement with communities to which children will return is essential. A situation analysis involving children and community members should investigate the ways in which the community has changed and how children have been changed as a result of their time with armed forces or groups.
- Even when a release is agreed many children may be kept back by commanders, or may be afraid to leave. Continuing advocacy and information campaigns are important to promote the release of all children.



- Contingency plans should be in place to manage the release of all children at all times, which may involve:
 - setting up a coordination structure which incorporates existing local capacity (governmental and other local structures)
 - drafting proposals for funding
 - agreeing roles amongst all actors (for instance, advocacy, documentation, information sharing, family tracing and reunification, interim care, community mobilisation.)
 - staff recruitment, training and supervision
 - implementation of a child protection policy
 - logistical and technical support
 - setting up temporary accommodation and organising interim care
 - pre-positioning food and relief items and sanitary items for children
 - liaising with family and community.

It is usually in their best interests for children associated with armed forces or armed groups to go through some kind of formal release process where they can receive support and assistance. In order for this to happen, children need to be informed and confident that the process and facilities will meet their needs. In order to encourage more children, especially girls, to benefit from formal programmes, agencies should:

- conduct an information campaign to inform children of their right to be released and the options available to them
- liaise with families and communities of recruited children so that, where possible, they can inform children of their rights and options
- advocate with armed forces or groups for access to children to explain their rights and options
- involve children and especially girls in programme design and ensure the particular needs of girls and their babies are provided for.

At the same time, particularly for children (largely but not exclusively girls) who do not wish to join formal processes, programming should develop community-based mechanisms where children, especially girls can be supported without being stigmatised.

What should happen to children during a release or demobilisation process?

The release or demobilisation process should be as brief as possible and should support the transition of the child from a military environment into civilian life. The safety and security of the child are primary considerations; they should be rapidly separated from adult fighters and handed over to an appropriate, mandated, independent civilian process. The objective of the release or demobilisation process is the integration or reintegration of the child.

Formal or informal processes may take place in a centre or community-based environment and once children have been screened, interviewed and assessed, subsequent actions will depend on the circumstances and needs of the child, for



example do they know where their family is or is tracing required, do children have medical or other needs that should be addressed before they return to their community? Some children will be able to go home directly, for others a period in interim care will be helpful (see below). It is essential however that communities are prepared for the return of children before they go home.

The same principles apply where children are demobilised as part of a formal demobilisation including all armed actors, adults and children, as part of a peace process and where children are demobilised through informal processes. In the case of a formal DDR process special provision should be made for children and links established to ensure coordinated and comprehensive support to the reintegration of children and their communities of return. Reference should be made to the Integrated disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration standards (IDDRS) 2006 particularly module 5.30 on children, and also 5.10 on women, gender and DDR and 5.20 on youth and DDR.¹²

Key principles in the release process

- Child protection agencies and children themselves should always be involved in decision making.
- Interviews of children should never be conducted for military purposes.
- Interviews for other purposes, such as to determine eligibility criteria, establish information about current circumstances and future plans or facilitate family tracing should be coordinated to avoid multiple interviews where possible. Prior to interviewing children they should be informed of the purpose of the interview and what will happen to the information.
- Interviews should be conducted in private, by persons of the same sex where possible, who are trained in interviewing children, and support should be provided to children.
- Children and particularly girls should be involved in decision making as far as possible; in order to do this they need to be fully informed about what is happening and what will happen.

Key measures to protect children in the release process

- Accommodation for children should be arranged at a safe distance from adult ex-combatants with sufficient security and measures in place to protect them from harassment or abuse, in particular sexual abuse.
- Separate accommodation must be available that meets the needs of girls including those who are pregnant or have children. Provision of hygiene and sanitary needs, health and nutrition care for infants and young children should also be available.
- Staff should be well trained and supervised and be able to communicate with children where possible in the child's mother tongue; female staff should always be available and should be able to provide appropriate support to young mothers.
- Children should be informed that they have a right not to be abused by anyone and how they can safely report any such incidents, should they occur.
- Where possible, the particular needs of children in relation to their culture and religion should be met.



- The capacity for urgent family tracing should be in place and in addition preparation of families and communities to which children will return. These efforts must link with existing child protection or tracing mechanisms and may need to be linked into or established at a local, national or regional level. Reference should be made to ICRC and their work with national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies.
- Original documentation forms should accompany children throughout the process.

For practical examples of demobilisation activities with children, see **Handout 5** and **Handout 6**.

Challenges and key issues

Criteria and eligibility for release processes

The definition of **children associated with armed forces or armed groups** in **Definitions of terms** should form the basis for deciding which children are eligible for the release process. There should be no variation from this definition, which has been endorsed at a global level.¹³ The criteria should be clearly laid down and communicated. These criteria must be provided to all workers involved in screening who should be trained in screening procedures and supervised. Girls must be explicitly included, whatever their roles in armed forces or armed groups.

Promoting the release of girls from armed forces or groups and their inclusion in release or demobilisation processes

Girls frequently remain with armed actors when boys are released, and most girls do not go through release or demobilisation processes. There are a number of reasons for this: girls are seen or see themselves as wives rather than soldiers, they fear exposure or see no future options for themselves. Those girls who are released or make a choice to leave are still unlikely to participate in release processes, seeing little of benefit and fearing additional stigmatisation. This situation is unlikely to change without the following: the issue of girls must be explicitly raised at every stage, included in negotiations for release and girls themselves must be included in designing programmes. Every programme should recognise the risk of girls being invisible, and take measures to correct this.

Documentation of information

Ensuring confidentiality and protection of sensitive information, especially in relation to parties to the conflict, is a significant challenge. Agencies should develop and implement guidelines and ensure all staff are fully trained. This applies to documentation for all purposes: eg. programme, advocacy, research.

It is essential for the protection of children and their families that personal information relating to violations of children's rights including recruitment or use by armed forces or groups shall be treated as confidential. Interagency information management systems should be developed and agreed between all actors implementing programmes who are collecting information, based on the need to protect children and to enable effective action on their behalf. Guidelines on protection of all data should be developed and implemented and training should be provided as necessary. All data stored must comply with the UN Fundamental principles of official statistics.



The Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups

Demobilisation papers

The provision of release or demobilisation papers for children is sometimes very useful. At a practical level these can ensure inclusion in programmes and they also support the notion of transition from military to civilian life. In other circumstances this has placed children at risk: papers can be seen as evidence of having participated in certain acts or as credentials for re-recruitment; children may be seen as having gained useful experience. Decisions must be made at a local level and all agencies, working with any formal DDR coordination body, must reach agreement on best practice in relation to demobilisation papers.

The release of children who are not in their country of nationality

The release or demobilisation process applies equally to these children. Once they are released their situation requires special attention with reference to the 1951 refugee convention, and they must be given access to asylum procedures and other protection, including protection from statelessness. Agencies should request the support of UNHCR, who have a mandate for the protection of refugee children.

Material benefits and assistance

Direct cash benefits to released or returning children are not an appropriate form of assistance and can place children at risk. Material assistance may be required for some children, for example those with a disability or girl mothers, but inappropriate assistance, especially if it is seen to be rewarding children for their involvement, can make their lives more difficult and impede reintegration. Generally benefits or services should be provided through communities and should focus on strengthening the capacity of the community to support children.

Attitudes of children and staff

The way children are received and regarded during the release process is likely to influence the way they see themselves, and the attitudes of staff are therefore very important. Children may present in a variety of ways and some may be challenging, belligerent or angry. Most children will be anxious and afraid, but not all will be grateful for demobilisation. Some children will have had positive experiences and relationships which they do not want to give up. Others may have become dependent even on abusive relationships. It is essential that staff be non-judgemental and maintain a neutral attitude towards children; this can be difficult where the staff themselves have been exposed to conflict or where they have strong prejudices against certain groups. Careful staff selection, training, support and supervision are all essential.

Prevention of re-recruitment

Children released from armed forces or groups during armed conflict are at particular risk of re-recruitment. Monitoring is necessary to ensure the chain of command is broken between children and armed actors, and the means to protect children exist. This can be difficult in ongoing conflict where access is limited. Informing children of their rights not to be recruited is essential as is providing adequate and appropriate support to their reintegration. Generally children are safer with their family and community, but in some circumstances reunification may have to be delayed where families are living in areas of conflict: agencies should work together to make



decisions on a case-by-case basis where possible. Community child protection networks have been important in preventing re-recruitment and their development should be promoted.

Health problems and disability

Planning for demobilisation or release of children must take into account the immediate and long-term needs of children with health related problems or disability as above. Full medical and nutritional screening and the capacity to respond to a range of problems must be available to all children.

Children may have a variety of health-related needs as a result of their association with armed forces or armed groups, which are likely to include the following.

- Children who have been firing weapons may have hearing problems, those who have been portering may have disability or lower limb or back problems; others may suffer from the consequences of malnourishment. Wounds or injuries may require specialist intervention.
- Sexually transmitted diseases need urgent diagnosis and treatment and specific responses and follow up are also required for children and adolescents likely to be infected with HIV, testing for which must be voluntary and the results of which must be confidential.¹⁴
- Children who have been subjected to SGBV will have specific needs. These are mainly girls but boys can also be subjected to such violence. Support services (legal, health and psychosocial support) should be made available and it is essential that such services are confidential and specially adapted to meet the needs of children, and provided by trained staff who are able to interact in a positive way with them. Detailed guidelines for management of SGBV including rape can be found in the IASC Guidelines on gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings.¹⁵
- Girls who are pregnant or young mothers are in need of special care and physical and psychological assessment and support, as are their infants or young children. There may be health or nutritional needs; girls may need support to care for their children and education in parenting skills. Girls may be ambivalent about caring for children born as a result of rape and they should be given the chance to consider their options for the future within a supportive environment.
- Disability is common following association with an armed force or group and in addition to the physical consequences; children with a disability are likely to be marginalised and may face neglect or abuse and isolation. It is especially important that these children are able to participate in decisions affecting their future and, as with girls, sensitive but proactive efforts will be needed to involve them in release programmes.
- Drug and alcohol dependency may be a problem depending on the context. In some circumstances children are regularly given drugs or habitually use alcohol. A simple survey amongst a random selection of children should indicate the extent of problems and whether specialist help is required. Where children are accommodated as part of the release and reintegration process there must be a clear zero tolerance policy relating to drugs and alcohol.
- Health education including reproductive healthcare is an important element, particularly for children who have spent many years in armed forces or groups.



Male and female medical personnel should be trained to recognise and treat problems likely to occur in children associated with armed forces or armed groups. Specialist care will be required for some children, as it will for some children in the local community, for example those injured by mines. Provision should be made for the specialist needs of all children to be addressed or referred to appropriate services.

Planning should also include resources for longer-term community-based rehabilitation (CBR) for all children with a disability, whose needs must also be taken into account in developing education or vocational training programmes.

Children subjected to SGBV are amongst those who need follow-up on return home and a strategy should be developed (with the participation of those children affected) to provide support in the long term if necessary. Targeted responses risk labelling children, whose needs may be better addressed through women's groups or girls clubs that have a broader constituency. Girls can also be helped through reproductive healthcare projects with vulnerable girls and women, such as girls living on the street or involved in prostitution. Girls who were not part of an armed force or armed group may also have been victims of SGBV and responses should be broad enough to include all affected girls.

For further information please refer to **Foundation module 1** Understanding childhoods and **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion.

Psychosocial issues

It is important not to make assumptions about children's needs and to remember boys and girls have different needs as do children of different ages.

Children who have been exposed to and involved in atrocities, physical and sexual violence and abuse, hardship and brutalisation whilst with armed forces or groups often have behavioural and emotional problems. Even those children not directly involved in conflict may be severely affected by separation from family and other experiences. Problems may present in a range of ways from lack of trust in others, nightmares and anxiety, to severe withdrawal, fear, aggression, agitated, restless and challenging behaviour or depression with suicidal thoughts and attempts. In the longer term, children may have difficulty in forming normal relationships including sexual relationships.

Many children however are remarkably resilient and initial problems often subside given a supportive and caring environment. A key factor is involving children and encouraging them to take an active role in planning and implementing their own reintegration and recovery. This is not only their right, but it can help to neutralise feelings of helplessness, distrust and isolation, and gives children something to work towards and hope for the future.

Please refer to **Foundation module 7** Psychosocial support for further information. Reference can also be made to a range of materials including:

- the IASC Guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings¹⁶
- 'Save the Children Alliance working paper: promoting psychosocial wellbeing among children affected by armed conflict and displacement, principles and approaches' 1996



Interim care

Interim care facilities, where they are required, should provide a safe and structured environment with age appropriate activities, assess and respond to immediate needs and develop a plan for longer-term support and follow up. They should **not** become an alternative to the development of adequate services in communities and the goal should always be to identify durable solutions in the community for all children.

Interim care is not required for all children associated with armed forces or armed groups. Certain children may benefit from a period of interim care in a setting where special assistance is provided by experienced staff, others may benefit from intensive psychological or medical support in the community, where this is available. Interim care should always be planned and implemented as part of a community-based programme to facilitate the return of children to their communities and to promote the protection and development of conflict-affected children in general.

Children who are likely to benefit from this kind of intensive support include:

- children with medical needs including problems related to drug or alcohol abuse
- children who have experienced rape or other forms of SGBV
- children who have witnessed or participated in atrocities
- children whose family cannot be found or who have been rejected by family or community or face hostility
- girls who are pregnant or have children.

Where interim care is required this may be arranged in an institution, a foster family or other supported care arrangements in the community. Children should remain in interim care for as brief a period as possible and measures must be taken to protect children from abuse and ensure they are provided with quality care and support. A code of conduct must be implemented and children informed of mechanisms to report abuse. Criteria and standards should be agreed between agencies and a participatory monitoring and evaluation process established which involves children.

Raising the standards, quality childcare in East and central Africa Save the Children Fund, 2005 provides standards for childcare in institutions.

The local community should be informed and allowed opportunities to raise and discuss concerns about residential care in their neighbourhood. Where possible children in the community should benefit from and be involved in activities provided by centres, such as sport and recreation.



Implementation strategies: reintegration

*'When we learn, nobody will fool us. If I knew books I would not have sat down in the bush and fired guns at people.'*¹⁷

Key learning points

- Reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups is a process that requires support over a long period.
- Activities in communities should benefit a wide range of conflict affected children and avoid distinctions between children associated with armed forces or armed groups and other children.
- Key components of successful reintegration are: the relationship of the child to family and community, healthcare including psychosocial issues, access to education and/or vocational training, livelihood support and safety and security.
- Girls, especially those who have children as a result of their association with armed forces or groups, are likely to require support and follow up over a longer period than boys.
- Justice is a critical and complex issue in relation to children who are recruited into armed forces or armed groups and it is important to have a broad understanding of the relevant law and standards and also the position and approach which has been broadly agreed amongst agencies working on this issue.

Welcoming children home

The majority of children look forward to returning home to family and community and some have high expectations. Others are afraid and anxious like this 16-year-old who had been fighting with an armed group in Sierra Leone:

*'I was afraid to come home for fear that I was going to be treated badly by the community and I was not sure if my parents would be alive or would accept me.'*¹⁸

In some circumstances such fears are justified; children may return to a very different family than the one they left as a result of death, eg. separation, remarriage, and communities can be angry and hostile. In other circumstances children do receive the joyful reunion they hope for.

Generally, obstacles can be overcome and adequate preparation can pave the way for a welcome home. As part of their assessment and discussions with children, families and communities, agencies should identify any obstacles and work out a plan to address the problems. Where possible, and in their best interests, children should be reunited with family. If during the process of best interests determinations, it is concluded that the return to family or community is not in the best interests of the child, alternative long-term solutions must be found.

What is meant by reintegration?

The term reintegration is subject to a range of interpretations but a general working definition has been agreed by the majority of agencies, this is the one in the glossary at the beginning of the module. In some circumstances the term **integration** is more accurate as children do not always return to the situation they came from but may



move into a new family or community. The term reintegration is used here as a general term.

Children have their own view of what reintegration means; when asked to define this as part of a research project in Sierra Leone children emphasised the following areas:

- family reunification and being cared for and loved
- acceptance and involvement in the community
- peace and security
- schools and skills training
- livelihoods.

The reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups takes time and a common constraint to programmes is the short term nature of emergency funding. Agencies should advocate with donors for funding which is flexible and allows them to develop a long-term strategic approach. They should help donors understand that if the necessary resources are not provided, children are at great risk of re-recruitment. Programmes also need to make the necessary linkages between short-term humanitarian assistance and longer-term development assistance.

The reintegration of children can and should be supported at all times, even during ongoing conflict and children should not have to wait for peace to access reintegration programmes. However, the level of support available may be limited and agencies may need to develop a phased approach to reintegration programming.

Children are generally best protected by their family and community and in most communities there are people, informal or formal structures with a key role in protecting children. The capacity of these people or structures to protect children is likely to have been affected by the emergency and an assessment should be made of current and potential support and how capacity can be rebuilt or developed. The situation analysis (see below) should identify resources within the community such as women's groups, religious groups, child protection committees, local authority bodies or government departments. A realistic plan for capacity building should be developed in collaboration with local partners.

Following conflict, the capacity of governments to respond to children's issues may be limited. However, there is also a risk that the government's role and responsibility towards its children is pre-empted by others. The involvement of appropriate ministries in programme planning and implementation is important, in order that reintegration develops from a shared perspective, and is implemented in a manner that allows for continuity and sustainability.

A **structure for coordination** should already be in place and it is important that as children return to or are placed in communities, this structure incorporates local actors as well as agencies involved in the broader reconstruction effort. This can be a protection cluster or child protection sub cluster where the cluster system is implemented. Coordination groups can become large and unwieldy and breaking the group down into smaller task groups can be useful. It is important to ensure contact is maintained between the task groups, an overall lead agency should be responsible for ensuring this happens. The coordination structure should also be used as a forum to agree standards and good practice and to work out solutions to complex challenges.



Ways to support the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups

Children come from vastly different circumstances, become associated with armed forces or groups for a range of reasons and are treated in very different ways. For example, girls fighting with the LTTE have generally not been exposed to sexual abuse within these forces. Whilst many of their experiences, such as separation from family, are common to most children, the experience of others is particular to the child or context. A variety of factors will influence the needs of individual children and also the reactions of their family and community. Thus a situation analysis should inform planning for the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups and should also take into account other war affected children. Please see **Topic 3** of this module or **Foundation module 3 Programme design, Section 3** for further information.

Family reunification

Following a best-interests assessment and determination, children should be reunited with family, where possible and in their best interests. Alternative family or community-based care arrangements should be made when this is not possible in a supportive and otherwise appropriate protective environment. For some older adolescents, who may not wish to live as part of a family, it may be possible to organise supervised and supported independent living arrangements in a community setting.

Children placed with extended family members can be vulnerable to neglect or abuse as this 15-year-old boy from West Africa expressed:

'they [extended family members] took us in as domestic servants and over-worked us.'

Monitoring of such care arrangements is essential and it is important to develop local capacity to carry out this monitoring over the longer term.

The success or otherwise of family reunification or placement is a critical factor in reintegration. Breakdown in family relationships was cited as a reason for children rejoining armed groups in Sri Lanka. Children reunited into families where one parent had remarried and the new partner did not welcome the child, or where there were problems of alcohol abuse or poverty, were at risk of re-recruitment. In some cases social workers were able to prevent this by finding children alternative accommodation.¹⁹

Families may struggle economically to support a returning child and agencies supporting the reintegration of children should develop links with all programmes, policies and initiatives which may be of benefit to them, whether through local or national social welfare programmes, or indirectly, through reconstruction and rehabilitation of national institutions and other development programmes. Families can also be offered economic support through income generating activities, or it may be possible to identify ways of supporting long-term livelihoods within affected communities, for example by providing seeds and tools or fishing equipment. It is important to recognise and address the need for economic support, but financial incentives should not be the main attraction of caring for children.

Displaced families who are dependent on external support may require advocacy to ensure they receive sufficient rations enabling them to support children who are reunited with them.



Relationships with community

The stigmatisation of children associated with armed forces or armed groups is one of the greatest barriers to reintegration and this is likely to be a particular problem for girls. Children who return may be viewed with suspicion or outright hostility as expressed by this community leader in Ivory Coast:

'that child [who chose to join the rebels] himself knows that he can't dare come back. His place is no more in the village. It is over for him. He is rejected by the whole community. There is no point in debating this; it is over once and for all.'

However, experience shows that even such uncompromising attitudes can be overcome through community mediation and engagement. A concerted effort is needed to enable communities to empathise with children. It is important to explain that children's rights have been violated, that they have suffered and were forced to do the bad things they did. In some communities, children are viewed and view themselves as carrying bad spirits from their experiences with armed forces or groups.

Appropriate cultural practices, as long as they are not harmful to children, can be essential to a child's reintegration and should be supported. Traditional healing for war affected children in Angola and Mozambique consists principally of cleansing or purification rituals, welcoming ceremonies can be important and in some communities children can 'win back' their place in the village by doing communal labour.

Challenges to reintegration of a different kind can exist where children have been encouraged by their communities or families to take part in hostilities, or are regarded as freedom fighters or heroes. It is important to encourage families and communities to remember that the children are first and foremost children and should be able to resume a role as a child within the community.

Helping children to make the transition

At the same time, preparation of the child is essential; informing them of changes in family make up, economic impact of the conflict and changes in the community that may have occurred as a result of the disruption caused by the conflict. It is important to work out how the child, who will also have changed, will fit into the community; how will their experiences and the skills they have gained affect their reintegration process? Returning to the life they led before may be very hard for those children for whom there were positive aspects to membership of an armed force or group; children may have escaped from violence, neglect or abuse or may have enjoyed the power, freedom and respect or having a productive role. For girls, joining an armed force or group may have been a way to escape harmful cultural practices such as forced or early marriage or female genital mutilation or to break away from traditional expectations.

Many children express a desire not just to be accepted back but to be actively involved in their community. One 15-year-old boy demobilised in West Africa stressed the importance of being able to *'work together with them and share fun with one another'*. For many, acceptance and active membership of the community is closely linked to feelings of belonging and being at ease with their own actions during the war.

The transition of children can be helped by the following.

- Establish a dialogue with family and community members as early as possible to explore their fears and prejudices and find out ways to address these.



- Identify who has influence in the community (mothers, elders, leaders) and whether they can be engaged to advocate for children, try to find allies in the community who are sympathetic.
- Identify existing supports within the community either formal or informal, as well as potential support people or systems and develop a plan for capacity building.
- Provide advice and support to families in relation to changes in their children and ways to support children.
- Promote the participation of adolescents in the assessment, design and implementation of programmes. This is one way of recognising their particular capacities and resilience as well as their vulnerabilities.
- Promote the involvement of children in community service and other social roles in the community. This helps to break down any stigma and enables children to develop appropriate support networks in the community.
- Promote the involvement of children in the rebuilding of their communities and in peace building activities. This helps to redirect leadership and other skills they have developed.
- Promote the development of networks of peer support through youth groups or other community-based programmes.
- Promote sports and recreation activities including music and drama for young people, as well as bringing youth together through sports competitions or performances are a way of bringing communities together.
- Involve women's organisations. This can be particularly useful for girls who need both positive role models and a supportive environment.

The situation analysis should also identify any potential obstacles to reintegration in relation to children's right to property or land. This has been a major issue in some contexts for returning children (not only children associated with armed forces or groups) where property or land has been taken over, or inheritance rights are disputed. Support to those children affected and representation in any civil proceedings may be required.

For further information please see **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion and **Foundation module 6** Community mobilisation.

The re-integration of girls

Programmes to assist girls associated with armed forces or groups must strike a careful balance between seeking to identify them in order to ensure their particular needs are met and not stigmatising them further. The key to any intervention is to consult with and be led by those affected.

Girls associated with armed forces or groups and girl mothers in particular may be amongst those children who require a longer period of support during reintegration. Some girls may not wish to return to their previous community; they may choose to live in urban centres in order to be less visible and to earn money. An alarmingly high number of girls in these situations have entered into prostitution.



Girls who do return to family and community may be viewed as an additional burden on their family and without value in terms of a bride price. They may be under pressure to provide an income, particularly if they return with children which in turn makes it more difficult for them to participate in educational and vocational training programmes. These girls too often have little choice but to turn to transactional sex or prostitution as a means of income generation. Girls may become depressed and isolated from their community particularly if other young people are told not to mix with them.

A particular obstacle to the reintegration of girls in Sri Lanka was their short hair which immediately identified them as having been associated with the LTTE.

Girls stated that they had no option but to spend the majority of their time in the family home until their hair grew back which could take up to a period of one year. Girls described this experience as being extremely isolating...they felt because of this they were unable to access education and unable to fulfil the ambitions that they had prior to their recruitment. Girls expressed a feeling of loss about being denied such opportunities and felt that it was not possible to enter formal schooling after they had been released and stayed at home for an extended period.

Review of underage recruitment project Save the Children in Sri Lanka, 2006

The reintegration of girls can be helped by the following.

- Ensure there is ample opportunity for extensive community dialogue and mediation emphasising that girls, especially those who are pregnant or girl mothers need the support of their family and community.
- Investigate strategies to support the acceptance of girls such as conducting traditional rituals or making reparations (as long as these are not harmful and are in the best interests of the girls).
- Ensure girls have access to healthcare, particularly reproductive healthcare.
- Identification of culturally appropriate support for girls who are depressed or suicidal. This may be required over a long period.
- Identify or establish women's groups in order to reduce girls' isolation and promote their wellbeing.
- Ensure the conditions exist to allow girls access to education, vocational or skills training for example by arranging childcare and help the community to accept girls moving into non-traditional areas of work where this will be of benefit to them.
- Promote the provision of mobile medical care for girls, pregnant girls and young mothers.

Programmes should seek to establish positive values for girls in their communities and families and try to find ways to reduce the stigma attached to girls who return, and to support girls entering into education, training and livelihood programmes. Imaginative steps should be taken to build on the resilience of girls and develop any skills they have learnt. The development of social activities for girls, for example through youth clubs is very important to prevent isolation. Girls are likely to need support over a long period so developing or building local capacity is essential.



These are only some ideas. Ask girls themselves what help they need and in what ways they can participate in developing programmes of support. Reference can be made to publications including:

- *Girls formerly associated with fighting forces and their children: returned and neglected* McKay S, Robinson M, Gonsalves M and Worthen M (Paper written following a meeting on girls in Bellagio, Italy 2004)
- www.childsoldiers.org

Further resources can be found in the reading section of this module.

Please see **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion for further information on involving and supporting girls.

Children who were not separated from family or community

In some contexts armed groups are very much a part of the community and children may be used by the armed group with the support and involvement of family and community. These children may have remained with family or maintained close ties and should not be separated from family unless it is in their best interests. Reintegration support should involve intensive work with children and their family and communities to change attitudes which promote children's involvement, work with children to help them adjust to a civilian life and initiatives to provide alternatives to a military life including education, vocational and skills training (see below).

Please see **Foundation module 6** Community mobilisation for further information on working with communities.

Education, vocational and skills training and livelihoods

Education, vocational and skills training and/or opportunities to support their own and their family's livelihoods are essential elements for reintegration. Programmes to support children in these areas should take into account the needs of all conflict affected children; providing education or other services only for children previously associated with armed forces or groups is likely to have a negative impact on reintegration.

The following principles apply to all education, vocational and skills training and livelihoods support which should be:

- accessible to all children including those who need childcare facilities and those with a disability
- free, available on a part time as well as full time basis, and include informal as well as formal assistance
- provided at flexible times, allowing for children's other commitments and children who participate should receive food whilst they are there
- adapted according to the child's age, experiences, and circumstances.

Education

When they leave armed forces or armed groups children from countries all over the world say the same thing: they want a chance to learn. Many want to go to school, others want to learn a skill. Education is every child's right, and for children previously associated with armed groups or forces, and for their families, education is seen as key to a better future.



Educational provision in a post conflict situation is a major challenge and in many developing countries access to quality education is generally inadequate. A strategic plan will be required to support governments in developing educational policy, rehabilitating or building schools, providing and distributing educational materials and developing curricula and training teachers. In situations where children have been associated with armed forces or armed groups there will be additional needs for accelerated learning programmes that are compatible with and recognised by the formal system of education and additional training to teachers in supporting children previously associated with armed actors.

Alternative forms of education such as adult literacy classes or evening classes should be offered to children who cannot or do not wish to enter the formal educational system.

Skills training, vocational training and livelihoods

There is an important difference in skills training that equips children for day-to-day living, and vocational training that will help them to earn an income. Some children may benefit from both, but it is important that vocational training is appropriate and relevant to the local economy, and practical assistance may be needed to help children start up work.

Programmes should recognise and build on the skills that young people may have learned while associated with an armed force or group. This will entail creating options and choices for them; girls in particular may wish to move into non-traditional areas of work such as carpentry or building, which may be more useful to them in the future than other more traditional programmes of vocational training such as soap making.

The following are key considerations in relation to skills training, vocational training and livelihoods support.

- Life skills training might include:
 - civic education
 - parenting skills
 - rights at work and home
 - prevention of HIV and AIDS
 - education to counter interpersonal violence; children who have learnt to use violence and aggression in their everyday lives may benefit from training in non-violent conflict resolution and anger management.
- A technical analysis of the livelihood systems, market opportunities, and household economies in the places to which children are returning should be used to develop economically relevant training, alternative forms of education, and opportunities for economic reintegration.
- Consultation with communities may identify potential to develop local programmes such as collective initiatives that benefit small groups of children and the community they return to.
- Children may need training in very basic business skills such as handling money and keeping accounts.



- Young people with no previous work experience should be offered apprenticeship and/or on-the-job training opportunities.
- Children may need to earn a living immediately upon return to their family and community; the production of small objects for sale could be included in a training phase or income generating activities combined with education.

Micro-finance projects were managed by community protection groups in Sri Lanka and a review of the programme noted: Factors leading to successful reintegration included the family's ability to maintain or get access to sustainable livelihoods options...both children and parents who had accessed successful livelihoods interventions stated that they were not only able to provide for their children, but it also meant that children did not have to work, and could access school or other activities.

Review of underage recruitment project Save the Children in Sri Lanka, 2006

Safety and security

The foremost requirement for successful reintegration is for children to be safe and secure and for them to be able to get on with their lives. An end to conflict is a central aim, but reconciliation and the ability of the community to live together peacefully and in unity is also essential.

The situation analysis should assess any risk to children **before** they return to or are placed in communities, and identify actions to mitigate risk, such as intensive community sensitisation and preparation and work on non-violent conflict resolution or management. In extreme cases where it is not in the best interests of the child to return, an alternative solution will be needed. It is important to look for the following.

- Risk on the basis of gender.
- Are the children feared, if so on what basis, what can be done to address the fears? Rumour and wild speculation can be responsible for many of peoples' concerns.
- Where children have been fighting with enemy groups will they be targeted or ostracised by community members?
- Children from different, opposing armed groups returning to the same communities. In such situations there is urgent need for work on non-violent conflict resolution or management.

The reintegration of children into civilian communities should be carried out in ways that facilitate local and national reconciliation and links should be made with conflict resolution and peace building activities implemented as part of the overall post conflict and reconstruction programme. Agencies should continue to advocate for a long-term commitment from the international community to support efforts to secure peace and security, and for the necessary commitment from donors to ensure the conditions are in place for recovery and development.



Capacity building

Building a protective environment for children, where their rights can be realised in the immediate and long term, will only be possible if there is sufficient capacity at the local level and in the wider community. This capacity, whether through formal or informal structures, is likely to have been eroded or affected as a result of the emergency. The effect may be seen in relation to physical capacity, for example lack of infrastructure or computers, or a lack of skilled personnel, or may relate to lack of knowledge, understanding or political will or motivation. The assessment of capacity, and any gaps, must also identify the priorities of those affected and any obstacles to capacity building.

Building capacity takes time and requires a true commitment from all those involved. A community mobilisation approach, where the affected community is helped to articulate and identify its own priorities, is likely to be more sustainable. Programmes for children associated with armed forces or armed groups should establish links and work closely with other development programmes and actors to provide longer-term support to these children and their communities. During reconstruction efforts in particular local capacity that does exist can be overburdened and it is important that agencies work collaboratively to avoid placing multiple demands on those affected.

The following are some key areas in which capacity building has been required in programmes for children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

- Support to local and national government to develop and implement appropriate policy and standards and to ensure national law reflects the highest possible standards in relation to the recruitment of children.
- Training and provision of resources to enable national birth registration programmes.
- Training government and non-government armed groups on their obligations under international law.
- Prevention of separation, family tracing and reunification and monitoring of care arrangements.
- Monitoring and reporting of recruitment.
- Deinstitutionalisation programmes.
- Reintegration and follow-up support for returning or reunited children.
- The development of local child protection committees.
- Advocacy.

It is important to carry out an analysis of the gaps in capacity and what can usefully be achieved. For example, in some situations family tracing may be best carried out by organisations who already have expertise in that area and capacity building efforts could focus on monitoring and support to reunited children.

Training material for this topic

Exercise 1 Forced recruitment of children

Exercise 2 Brainstorm on monitoring and reporting on recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups



- Exercise 3** Developing an advocacy strategy for prevention of recruitment into armed forces or armed groups
- Exercise 4** Risk mapping
- Exercise 5** Advocacy for the release of children from armed groups
- Exercise 6** Planning for release or demobilisation
- Exercise 7** Developing a response for health issues related to demobilisation
- Exercise 8** Interim care
- Exercise 9** Reintegration exercise
- Exercise 10** Reintegration case study analysis
- Exercise 11** Planning for reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups
- Exercise 12** Community engagement
- Exercise 13** A return to normal life
- Handout 1** Case studies
- Handout 2** Advocacy task
- Handout 3** Scenario
- Handout 4** Preventing recruitment *Save the Children Sweden's experience in northern Kenya*
- Handout 5** Procedures and efforts to demobilise children associated with armed forces or armed groups in Sierra Leone
- Handout 6** Demobilisation of children associated with armed forces or armed groups in Mozambique
- Handout 7** Case studies
- Handout 8** Scenario
- Handout 9** Associated press report April 1998

Topic 5

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Key learning points

- Indicators must measure the reintegration of CAAFAG and their wellbeing following their reintegration into family and the community. But reintegration is a long-term process.
- Monitoring and evaluation should assess whether CAAFAG are being appropriately identified and protected through programme implementation without causing stigmatisation. Especially girls fall through the cracks of the systems and programmes need to monitor and evaluate whether the gender dimension has been addressed appropriately.
- A monitoring and evaluation system should be set up at the start of a programme with indicators, collecting, analysing and using data to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children, CAAFAG or others.
- Rights-based monitoring and evaluation should be participatory, thereby involving children themselves, culturally appropriate, ethical and monitor fulfilment of rights as well as needs.

Monitoring is the ongoing tracking of the programme's implementation. Monitoring is a programme management function and serves the immediate information needs to be analysed and evaluated.

Evaluation is the collection and analysis of meaningful information to guide the implementation of a programme, but also to guide learning, decision making and practice.

A monitoring and evaluation system (M&E) should be established at the beginning of programming in order to define the goals of the child protection programme and initiate the process of gathering and recording key information. Even in an emergency, child protection activities must assess the achievement of its objectives.

*Introduction to child protection in emergencies, an interagency modular training package*²⁰

Monitoring involves carrying out activities that allow learning about and a better understanding of:

- the situation
- what is happening to people
- activities or programmes.

Enquiries may be made relating to a particularly vulnerable group of children (not only CAAFAG as it is stated in the Paris principles and commitments), collecting specific data or a range of information related to indicators. Enquiries may focus on the **process** (for example, how was the activity set up?) or the **content** (for example,



was the activity seen as useful? Can positive change be observed as a result of the activity?). The purpose of all such monitoring activities is twofold:

- 1 to inform the immediate work
- 2 to develop learning either relating to the current situation or other and future programmes.

What should be measured?

- 1 How were the activities implemented? What were the outputs?
- 2 What were the results of the programme? Outcomes or immediate effects.
- 3 What is the impact of the programme from the baseline data? How is the situation different from the situation before the programme started?

Whichever kind of monitoring is involved in this should be seen as something dynamic and all those engaged in monitoring should be helped to see how their efforts can make a difference to people's lives.

Conceptual framework

Monitoring and follow-up of children following reintegration

Ensuring the capacity for monitoring and follow up is a way of keeping children safe and in some cases is essential to protect their rights, prevent re-recruitment and identify and support those children who experience serious difficulties on return to their communities. Individual follow up is not possible where large numbers of children are involved, and all children do not need to be individually monitored, especially where the overall approach of reintegration has been to build a protective environment. Girls in particular however may need intensive follow up and this may be required over a longer period than for boys. Follow up is more likely to be effective if the community, including affected children, are involved in developing criteria to help establish which children need this kind of support.

Agencies involved in the reintegration of children should assess their own capacity for follow up and for responding to problems and concerns, and work out an appropriate strategy bearing in mind the potential long-term needs. Agency staff may need to be involved initially, but the focus should be on developing local capacity (communities including children's capacity) and ensuring there are links with local leaders, mechanisms and structures and where relevant with national and sub-regional mechanisms. The strategy should also include a mechanism to agree when a child is no longer in need of this targeted support.



Follow up visits in Sri Lanka

Reintegrated children were followed up through home visits by social workers for up to two years in affected areas of Sri Lanka and this intensive approach was seen as important in a context where re-recruitment rates were high. Families reported a sense of security from the visits; evidence of an international agency carrying out monitoring was likely to deter recruiters. The first six months was seen as a critical period when social workers were able to provide much needed emotional support to the child and the family as they adjusted to one another. Social workers also had a valuable role in mediation with various actors in the community, on behalf of the family and child, and in referral on to other programmes. Whilst providing key emotional support for children and families, this model was heavily reliant on significant numbers of trained social workers and parallel programmes of community-based protection were also being piloted by the agency which also showed good outcomes. Early evaluations highlighted the need for comprehensive training for those community members involved.

Review of underage recruitment project Save the Children in Sri Lanka, 2006

See **Foundation module 3** Programme design for detailed guidance on monitoring and evaluation.

Principles of rights-based monitoring and evaluation

A rights-based approach has implications for both:

- **what** is monitored and evaluated: effort, effect and change, and the standards of the implementation processes used
- **how** it is monitored.

Legislation must be applied recognising a series of rights to CAAFAG. Even if the country has not signed the CRC Option protocol 2 that prohibits recruitment under 18, the CRC prohibits recruitment under 15. Several rights of the child are associated with the appropriate reintegration of the CAAFAG in their families and communities.

They have the right to:

- be with their family
- education
- development
- health
- the enjoyment of free time
- access to humanitarian assistance.

Programmes for vulnerable children including CAAFAG need to monitor and evaluate if the activities help to fulfil children's rights.

Children's rights include the right to participation and non-discrimination. For programmes involving CAAFAG this is of paramount importance to ensure that children benefit from the reintegration activities, but that their involvement in the programme



will not have negative consequences due to stigmatisation (**do no harm** principle). On the other hand CAAFAG should not be targeted exclusively as such and create further discrimination to other vulnerable children in the community (Paris principles).

Please refer to **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches for further information.

Where M&E fits into the bigger picture of change

A participatory process for M&E should be incorporated into programmes from the very beginning. This means that agencies need to ensure they have the capacity including knowledge, time, funding and commitment to develop a process, where possible with the affected community (ideally involving children), to monitor the success of the programme or identify where programme objectives are not being met, at various stages of the programme cycle. In order to be useful a certain amount of flexibility is required within programmes to ensure learning can be integrated.

M&E should be simple enough to be seen as useful and not so complex that it becomes an end in itself. The development of qualitative indicators around issues such as prevention of recruitment can be complicated. Agencies should work together to share experience; many agencies have considerable expertise in developing tools for M&E.

The following table uses the sequence of project logic expressed in a **logical framework** to make a distinction between the different types of indicators that are necessary in order to measure not just outcomes but also the process. This provides a very useful framework within which indicators specific to your programme can be developed.

	Narrative summary	Indicators
Goal fulfillment of children's rights	Which children's rights are being met? (framed as overall changes for children)	What indicators tell you whether children's rights are being enjoyed?
Objectives contribution to goal	What is your contribution to the goal, framed in terms of resolution of capacity gaps and SMART? ²¹	What indicators tell you whether the changes have taken place and how?
Process	How does the process encourage participation, develop capacity, accountability and equity? How does it empower people? How does it affect equity and gender disparity?	What indicators (or other evidence) will you use to measure participation improved capacity, accountability and empowerment?
Outputs or impact	What outputs or impacts will your programme produce that lead to improvements in the fulfilment of rights?	What outputs or impacts will you produce and when?



Activities	Did you identify and target underlying causes? What activities must duty bearers undertake? Which ones and when?	Inputs: What responsibilities and authorities are accepted and what resources are required by duty bearers over the period?
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Adapted from *Getting it right* Save the Children Alliance p64

M&E is a dynamic process and mechanisms should be established which ensure learning is fed back into planning and design of future programmes and into organisations' own institutional learning. All too often M&E is seen as an end in itself; there are huge opportunity costs if learning from a programme is not applied more broadly.

Indicators

Indicators have to be developed concurrently with the objectives keeping in mind they have to help in measuring changes in the wellbeing of children affected by the programme. Each programme that includes CAAFAG needs to develop its own set of indicators for each level as appropriate. Indicators have to measure both the activities that are being undertaken (outputs) and the achievement of objectives set (outcomes) for the programme. But more importantly they need to explain if the global impact of the programme was positive and what it was.

In programmes involving CAAFAG the most important indicators are those to assess the degree of (re)integration of children in their communities. Indicators need to be developed and contextualised. A one-list-fit-for-all indicator does not work, because integration means different things in different communities or for individuals:

- getting married and having children
- going back to school
- move to a new community or migrate and form a new household
- finding a job in the community
- being accepted by the elders or religious leaders in the community.

Therefore communities, children and national personnel need to be involved in the development of those reintegration indicators.

Indicators do not play an exclusive role at the end of the programme period, but during implementation to redress activities and inform working plans. Children and their communities must be involved during the process.

The output indicators around identification of and response to the presence of CAAFAG take into consideration activities that include vulnerable children following the Paris principles as major guidelines for programmes involving CAAFAG. This has implications for when it would be appropriate to collect information about the different indicators and also encourages the programme to carefully think about how to use the information. Remember that collecting one round of outcome indicators at the beginning of the programme can set a baseline against which you can compare progress in the future. Indicators must be disaggregated by gender and age.



The development of adequate quantitative and qualitative indicators in the design of the programme is a key to obtain data that gives the implementing agency and the communities relevant information to assess the outputs and outcomes of the programme (processes) and an indication of whether objectives are actually being met (impact). Quantitative indicators can be measured using numbers or percentages while qualitative indicators are based on observations, interviews, and the perceptions of those affected by programming. Transforming qualitative indicators in quantitative ones (for example, asking interviewees to assign numbers to the degree of satisfaction from one to five) can be a useful tool to monitor implementation and to respond to donor demands, but the complexity of the field is obviously not easy to reduce to a numeric science.

Quantitative indicators may include:

- number of ex-CAAFAG placed in foster care
- number of ex-CAAFAG heads of household or number of young children ex-CAAFAG who associate themselves to form a new ex-CAAFAG
- number of ex-CAAFAG returned to families
- number of ex-CAAFAG attending school and community activities
- number of ex-CAAFAG registered.

Qualitative indicators may include:

- reports by teachers on the school achievement of ex-CAAFAG
- anecdotal reports by families of the improved outlook of ex-CAAFAG
- ex-CAAFAG and foster families report satisfaction with arrangements
- overall reduction in disturbances involving ex-CAAFAG as reported by community leaders
- successful spontaneous care arrangements with minimal support.

Developing data collection tools and processes

Development of data collection tools must be participatory in order to avoid, for instance, distortion of the data and biases. The process of development these tools in a participatory manner might seem time-consuming, but will save time in the long term. As reintegration of CAAFAG is a long-term process, the tools developed need to take into consideration the follow up of cases, the support of local structures (eg. government, child protection committees) that will use them to ensure reintegration of difficult cases. The short term of humanitarian programmes is an obstacle to ensure and to measure the achievement of overall objectives targeting reintegration of CAAFAG.

Any M&E system for programmes including CAAFAG includes at least:

- tools for data collection for the different methodologies of data collection (for instance, direct observation, interviews, focus group discussions, surveys.)
- reporting formats for data collected (eg. registration forms, follow-up forms, foster families reception and release of children forms, Interim Centre for Children forms, armed groups release forms)



- a database system for storing data (eg. the Interagency child protection database)
- a protocol for data collection and storage which should also include data protection.

CAAFAG related information is especially sensitive and need to be dealt with tact not to jeopardise children's rights and future. Only necessary information needs to be collected for specific purposes. Information not needed should not be collected. Sensitive information that can be used for wrong purposes or is not secured should be destroyed.

Data analysis

Critical to successful monitoring in emergency situations is **frequent and regular analysis of the data** that has been gathered. This should be done by staff that are implementing programmes with communities and should be supported by, and include, programme management and advisers. This requires holding frequent meetings to discuss progress and findings to date and to plan changes in the programme based on this analysis. Note that this is also an opportunity to discuss whether the information you are collecting is relevant (or whether you need to change your indicators) and anything of importance that communities and/or staff on the ground have been noticing that is not directly related to the indicators. Involving communities, including children, in this process will not only make sure that the programme remains relevant, but is also likely to increase its potential for effectiveness and impact (since the people you are trying to help are in the best position to understand their own experience of the interventions) as well as empowering them and increasing the agencies' accountability to them in the process

Please refer to **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches for further information.

Training material for this topic

For a generic exercise on monitoring and evaluation that can be adapted for this module, see **Foundation module 3** Programme design, **Section 5**.



Endnotes

- 1 For further guidance see the Paris commitments on children recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups, *A fighting chance: guidelines and implications for programmes for children associated with armed forces and armed groups* Save the Children Alliance, *Children, not soldiers: guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces* Save the Children UK, 2001
- 2 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
- 3 *The scars of death: children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda* Human Rights Watch Report 1997
- 4 *Fighting back* Save the Children Fund, 2005
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Ibid
- 7 *Right to education: recruitment and use of child soldiers* submission from Human Rights Watch to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Human Rights Watch, BURMA (MYANMAR) October 2003
- 8 *'You'll learn not to cry': child combatants in Colombia* Human Rights Watch, September 2003
- 9 *Fighting back* Save the Children Fund, 2005
- 10 *'You'll learn not to cry': child combatants in Colombia* Human Rights Watch, September 2003
- 11 Ibid
- 12 <http://www.unddr.org/iddrs.aspx>
- 13 From the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups
- 14 Guidelines for HIV can be found in the *IASC Guidelines for HIV and AIDS interventions in emergency* <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-products-products&productcatid=9>
- 15 <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-products-products&productcatid=9>
- 16 *Guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings* Inter-agency Standing Committee, Geneva 2007
- 17 *Fighting back* Save the Children, 2005
- 18 *You'll learn not to cry: child combatants in Colombia* Human Rights Watch, September 2003.
- 19 *Review of underage recruitment* Save the Children in Sri Lanka, 2006
- 20 Available on request from UNICEF, IRC or SCF
- 21 SMART is an acronym often used to describe the characteristics of a good objective, which must be: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound



Further reading

- *A fighting chance: guidelines and implications for programmes involving children associated with armed groups and armed forces* Save the Children UK, 2004
- *Africa, easy prey: Child soldiers in Liberia* Human Rights Watch, New York 1994
- *Africa, scars of death: Children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda* Human rights watch, New York 1997
- *Breaking God's commands: the destruction of childhood by the Lord's Resistance Army* Amnesty International, London 1997
- *Cape Town principles and best practice on the prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces and demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers in Africa*, 1997
- *Children and political violence* Cairns E, Blackwells, Oxford 1996
- *Children and DDR* Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) Working Groups, 2005
- *Children in war: community strategies for healing* University of Zimbabwe and Duke
- *Children: the invisible soldiers* Brett R and McCallin M, Rädda Barnen, Stockholm 1998
- *Children, not soldiers: guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces* McConnan I and Uppard S, Save the Children UK, London 2001
- *Child's rights and child protection before, during and after conflict: training manual* Save the Children Sweden, 2000
- *Child soldiers: care and protection of children in emergencies* Save the Children US, 2001
- *Child soldiers* Goodwin G, Cohn G and Cohn I, Clarendon press, Oxford 1994 (also published in French, *Enfants soldats*)
- *Child soldiers global report 2007* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
- *Fighting back, child and community led strategies to avoid children's recruitment into armed forces and groups in West Africa* Save the Children, 2005
- *Forgotten casualties of war: girls in armed conflict* Save the Children UK, 2005
- *Getting it right, doing it right: gender disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration* UNIFEM, 2004
- *Girls with guns: an agenda on child soldiers for 'Beijing plus five'* Geneva, June 2000 Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Save the Children-USA, Durham University, North Carolina 1995
- *Going home: demobilising and reintegrating child soldiers in DRC* Save the Children UK, 2003
- *Impact of armed conflict on children* Graça Machel, UN, 1996
- *Inter-agency guidelines for developing reintegration programmes for children affected by armed conflict in West Africa* Save the Children UK, 2007



Further reading

- *Machel study 10 year strategic review: children and conflict in a changing world* UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSR CAAC), 2007
- *Neither war, nor peace: children in organised armed violence* Dowdney L, 2006
- *No place like home? Children's experience of reintegration in the Kailahun district of Sierra Leone* Save the Children, 2004
- *Prevention of underage military recruitment* Save the Children
- *Promoting psycho-social well-being among children affected by armed conflict and displacement: principles and approaches* SCA working paper No. 1, Save the Children Alliance, Geneva 1996
- 'Protection of children in armed conflicts: the rules of international law and the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross' *The international journal of children's rights* Dutli MT and Bouvier A, 1996
- *Restoring playfulness: different approaches to assisting children who are psychologically affected by war or displacement* Tolfree D, Radda Barnen, Stockholm 1996
- *Rethinking the trauma of war* Bracken PJ and Petty C, Save the Children, London 1998
- *Stolen futures: the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict* submission of the 10 year review of the Graca Machel study, Save the Children, 2007
- *The Paris principles 2007*
- *The use of children as soldiers in Africa* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers Geneva March 1999
- *The use of children as soldiers in Asia* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Geneva April 2000
- *The use of children as soldiers in Europe* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Geneva October 1999
- *The use of children as soldiers in Latin America* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Geneva July 1999
- *Too young to serve: the consequences of a lost childhood* Campbell J, University of Bristol, Bristol 1997
- *Why do adolescents volunteer for armed forces or armed groups?* Brett R, Quaker UN Office, 2003

Websites

- Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
(Established by six leading NGOs, the coalition's primary objectives are the adoption of and adherence to an optional protocol to the CRC prohibiting the military recruitment and use in hostilities of any young person younger than 18 years of age by all armed forces and groups, both governmental and non-governmental.)
<http://www.child-soldiers.org>
- International Committee of the Red Cross
(The ICRC site is helpful for referencing the humanitarian provisions, commentary and



Further reading

detail of their activities and documents in this area.)

<http://www.icrc.org>

- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
(Provides information on key treaties, juvenile justice provisions and CRC observations.)
<http://www.unhchr.ch>
- Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups 2007
<http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/ParisPrinciples310107English.pdf>
- SOLDOC Database, Rädda Barnen
<http://www.rb.se>
- Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict
(Gives a brief explanation on issues of children associated with armed forces or armed groups along with a highlight on the optional protocol. Also mission reports and documents dealing with children in armed conflicts in general and children associated with armed forces or armed groups especially.)
<http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>
- The Paris commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups, 2007 http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58012.html
- UNICEF
(Provides details of the optional protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, along with information on the recently adopted Security Council Resolution no. 1314 on children and war.)
<http://www.unicef.org/>



Guidance for training on critical issues

All Critical issue modules follow the same pattern of five topics.

- **Topic 1** The issue for children
- **Topic 2** The law and child rights
- **Topic 3** Assessment and situation analysis
- **Topic 4** Planning and implementation
- **Topic 5** Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Anyone facilitating a training or awareness-raising event on a specific critical issue should refer to the recommended **key learning objectives** below for each of these topics. With each of the sets of learning objectives is a suggested **sequence of information** to be followed when tackling the topic, in order to ensure that the learning objectives are achieved.

Topic 1 The issue for children

Key learning objectives that participants should be able to:

- describe why and how this critical issue impacts on the lives and rights of children in humanitarian settings
- be motivated to address these issues effectively.

Sequence of information

- 1** What this critical issue covers (might include definitions, different situations, manifestations, interpretations).
- 2** How it impacts on children (at different ages and stages; in different situations; considerations of gender and exclusion).
- 3** Why it is important to respond.

Topic 2 The law and child rights

Key learning objectives that participants should be able to:

- cite and justify relevant legal instruments and standards in relation to this critical issue
- identify key duty bearers in relation to the issues addressed in this module
- cite and respect key guiding principles in addressing these issues.

Sequence of information

- 1** Relevant legal instruments and standards.
- 2** Relationship between duty bearers and rights holders.
- 3** Guiding principles.



Topic 3 Assessment and situation analysis

Key learning objectives that participants should be able to:

- describe why rights-based assessment and analysis are essential components of any programming in humanitarian environments
- develop a plan and process for assessment and/or analysis that is informed by rights-based principles and approaches; and which addresses the specific issues raised in a particular module
- identify challenges that they may face.

Sequence of information

- 1 Why assessment and analysis is essential
- 2 Difference between assessment and analysis and where each is appropriate
- 3 Core principles
- 4 Key tools
- 5 Challenges and opportunities
- 6 Plan for assessment and/or analysis

Topic 4 Planning and implementation

Key learning objectives that participants should be able to:

- describe principles and approaches that should be part of any and all implementation strategies
- reflect on how these approaches should apply to the different implementation strategies that address the issues raised in a situation analysis
- make informed decisions about which of these strategies to prioritise and how to implement them effectively.

Sequence of information

- 1 Relevant guiding principles:
Working to common goals
Coordinated approach
Participation and inclusion.
- 2 Prevention and implementation strategies:
The three pillars
Monitoring and reporting on progress in achieving children's rights.
- 3 Prioritisation and operational guidance



Topic 5 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Key learning objectives that participants should be able to:

- describe overall (dimensions of) change to which all child rights-based programmes are working
- describe how interventions proposed in relation to this critical issue contribute to this process of change
- develop relevant indicators of progress at output and outcome levels
- use participatory and inclusive approaches in gathering and analysing indicators.

Sequence of information

- 1 Overview of dimensions of change to which all child rights-based programmes are working.
- 2 Clarity about relationship between impact, evaluation and monitoring processes and indicators required at each level.
- 3 Development of sample indicators for each level.
- 4 Guidance about appropriate and inclusive methodologies for M&E.

Links to Foundation modules

It is important to refer to relevant Foundation modules when gathering information to support activities in relation to individual topics. The links between Critical issue topics and Foundation modules are outlined below.

- **Topic 1** The issue for children
Foundation module 1 Understanding childhoods
- **Topic 2** The law and child rights
Foundation module 2 Child rights-based approaches
Foundation module 5 Advocacy
- **Topic 3** Assessment and situation analysis
Foundation module 3 Programme design
Foundation module 4 Participation and inclusion
- **Topic 4** Planning and implementation
Foundation module 4 Participation and inclusion
Foundation module 5 Advocacy
Foundation module 6 Community mobilisation
Foundation module 7 Psychosocial support
- **Topic 5** Monitoring, evaluation and learning
Foundation module 2 Child rights-based approaches
Foundation module 3 Programme design

For further guidance on developing and running training and awareness-raising events please refer to the **Training manual** and **Facilitator's toolkit** on the ARC resource pack CD-ROM.



Guidance for training on critical issues

Planning guide

Ideally anyone facilitating a training or awareness-raising event should work with a small planning group of resource people who have a good understanding of the local area and the targeted training group. They need to ensure that:

- they agree the best possible capacity-building intervention with the commissioning manager for the event
- they make rights **real** in any workshop, for example by building in field visits, showing relevant videos and DVDs, encouraging personal reflections and developing a workshop **bill of rights** with the participants
- they emphasise participation, inclusion and accountability at all stages.

The table below can be used when considering how best to present or enable participants to achieve the **key learning objectives** of each topic covered.

Sequence of information	Methodology eg. exercises, discussions	Comments eg. specific target groups

