Improving Support to Child Reintegration

Summary of findings from three reports

GLOBAL COALITION
FOR REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS

Preface

I t is a measure of our humanity and how we care for the most vulnerable amongst us. None can be more in need of our assistance than those children who have been used and abused by armed groups and armed forces. We have learned much since the issue was brought to the fore and reintegration measures put in place to help these children regain their lives. This series of papers makes a new contribution to that awareness and knowledge by demonstrating how it is the responsibility of all the international community to join together and act. Thousands of children recruited and used by armed groups, and other affected children in their communities, do not receive the minimal care or services to reweave the fabric of a torn society. Those that do get help, often do so for just a few months, rather than the essential 3-5 years needed for reintegration. This must change.

The information contained in these pages is a call to action to redouble our efforts to bridge the humanitarian-peacebuilding-development nexus and ensure that children do not fall between the cracks of this nexus. The SDGs are a primary vehicle to improve outcomes for these children and provide sustained and sustainable systems change to enhance child protection in the countries where there is conflict.

As the Secretary-General has called, this is our Decade of Action and a key focus must be on bringing together all those involved in child reintegration activities to better plan, coordinate and resource these crucial, life-restoring actions. We are behind in the real-world change that the SDGs were meant to usher in and working to help this cohort would be a "proof of concept" to show that working across pillars is the most effective and most efficient way to create the change we seek.

He has also asked Member States to make a "quantum leap" to $500 million per year in support of the Peacebuilding Fund, which could also support short-, medium- and longer-term programs to ensure the children and their communities receive necessary investments in their lives. Engaging and supporting young people, especially in conflict countries where they are often over half of the population, is a priority for the United Nations and is at the core of what the SDGs are meant to achieve.

I am pleased to support this forward-looking endeavor and hope that Member States, financial institutions, civil society, private sector and many others take up this call to action to work together to help our most vulnerable, break cycles of violence and reach their full potential.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed

> "This is a call to action to redouble our efforts to bridge the HDP nexus and ensure children do not fall between the cracks.

Overview

Launched in September 2018, the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers—co-chaired by the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the United Nations Children's Fund—tasked its Expert Advisory Group to carry out research, interviews and a series of consultations[1] to develop three interrelated briefing papers, each with a distinct focus, but all with an aim to understand how the international community could more effectively support children who have exited armed forces and armed groups. This document is a summary of the three papers and contains actionable recommendations at the end to stimulate thinking and action to assist these most vulnerable children and their communities.[2]

The main areas of inquiry were divided into three thematic briefing papers: 1) ***Gaps and Needs of Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups' Successful Reintegration***, 2) ***Reframing Child Reintegration: From the Humanitarian Action to Development, Peacebuilding, Prevention and Beyond***, and 3) ***Financing Support for Child Reintegration***. They explore the current status and issues surrounding funding for programming and general support, as well as options for more predictable and sustainable opportunities moving forward.

"Supporting children associated with armed forces and groups requires adequately funded and sustained investments over time.

Rationale

The recruitment and use of girls and boys in armed conflict is one of the most egregious violations of children's rights. The emotional and cognitive growth of these children—and the structures and policies that support them—are **crucial to unlock their capabilities and the future prospects for their societies**. Many children who have exited armed forces or groups require long-term and sustained reintegration support.

The research from the briefing papers reaffirmed the experts' opinion that supporting children associated with armed forces and groups requires **adequately funded and sustained investments over time**, as many children require continuing support for extended periods after exiting armed groups, on average three to five years. To be effective, such sustained assistance requires the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders in multiple sectors and **across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN)**.

While global advocacy to help these children has increased over the years, a **"reintegration gap"** remains that needs to be filled through increased awareness and coordinated global action. This makes sense not only from a humanitarian, human-centered perspective, but also as a strategic investment in long-term and sustainable peace and development for their societies.

Child protection partners have had substantial successes in reintegration programming for children, with thousands of children supported with services. However, successes are stymied by short-term and unpredictable humanitarian funding streams. The reality of child reintegration programming is that it has tended to be too short in duration and often limited in scope due to resource and other constraints. Most typically, it is humanitarian actors who are expected to take primary responsibility for providing children with the continuum of care that they need. This short-term perspective disregards the responsibility of governments and others have to support children reintegrating, especially in the medium- to long-term.

In the context of post-conflict recovery, development and peacebuilding, assisting children who have exited armed forces and groups must include increasing the responsibility and accountability of national counterparts over time while gradually decreasing exogenous support. The United Nations and World Bank study *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* asserts that longer-term efforts to strengthen national systems and institutions that **prevent** the recruitment and use of children (e.g. education) is more cost-effective and appropriate than a response alone. **Supporting child reintegration is a strategic intervention for ALL stakeholders interested in reducing conflict**— governments, donors and agencies—and moving towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Assisting children associated with armed forces and groups is a shared opportunity to achieve these collective outcomes.

Recommendations

The Global Coalition's three briefing papers make the following suggestions for the way forward:

Key overarching recommendations

- Conduct research and generate evidence at the field level to show which interventions in support of child reintegration are most effective and warrant further investment;

- Make reintegration support available to children for a minimum of 3-5 years per child, based on the needs of the child and his or her family and community;

- Promote child reintegration as the shared responsibility of multiple stakeholders across sectors and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus;

- Fund community-based reintegration programming that can address children's needs in the medium- to longer-term, and that span the HDPN continuum seamlessly;

- Build programming around one coherent framework with measurement tools and indicators that can be used across the continuum;

- Leverage existing funding mechanisms to achieve results, and create new mechanisms as required.

Recommendations for policy

- Adopt and promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the Paris Principles and Guidelines, Vancouver Principles, Safe Schools Declaration and other relevant international instruments, guidelines and policies on children and armed conflict;

- States should take all measures to comply with, *inter alia*, UN Security Council Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1325 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 2225 (2015), 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018), and 2427 (2018);

- Establish national legal and policy frameworks that comply with and implement the provisions of international law conducive to ending, preventing, and responding to recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and that integrates reintegration into national and sub-national structures, policies and

A former child soldier in a welding class at a vocational training center supported by the Child Development Foundation (CDF) in Medani, El-Gezira state, Sudan.

services for child protection, education, health and other aspects of social services and welfare, and child protection;

- Affirm and incorporate into national and local plans the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a framework for the successful reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups; lengthening the time horizon for reintegration and addressing multiple programming needs that include education and vocational training (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), employment and livelihoods (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10) and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), and strengthened partnerships (SDG 17); while recognizing that eradicating the recruitment and use of children is specifically referenced in the SDG Target 8.7;

- Engage in processes—including establishing, signing and implementing UN Security Council mandated Action Plans—where needed to end and prevent all six grave violations of children's rights, including specific work plans to end and prevent recruitment and use of children in armed conflict;

- Critically assess the impact of key funding instruments in the context in which they are to be used, especially those developing and submitting funding requests, those providing financial support, or those seeking funds and implementing programs.

Recommendations for practice

Planning

- Adopt a common strategic vision and theory of change—in line with the UN's New Way of Working—where sector actors across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus forge partnerships and adopt a consortium approach to child reintegration that harnesses comparative advantages towards collective, sustainable, multi-year reintegration outcomes, and contribute to a robust protective environment and strong child protection systems, without compromise to humanitarian principles;

- Define shared metrics of success to guide collective outcomes;

- Situate child reintegration programming within broader child protection interventions that prioritize prevention and comprehensive response services, including an investment in child protection, education and health care systems strengthening nationally and at the community level, with emphasis placed on aspects of social reintegration that support and engage parents, families and communities, promote psychosocial recovery, address stigma and foster social cohesion;

Operations

- Support national and local education systems to link with other government agencies in support of child reintegration, including short-term education, trauma-informed education or accelerated learning programs; and provide funding to education systems in conflict-affected countries to rebuild, impart skills and integrate the values of peace, tolerance and acceptance in curricula and enrichment materials. Where possible, implement psychosocial support and health activities through schools to support all students and teachers affected by conflict;

- Ensure that programming and financing for child reintegration take into account conflict dynamics and sensitivities, and include local authorities, children and communities in needs assessment and program design;

Funding

- Rather than using "per child" estimates in costing, estimate the overall national programming needs for reintegration within broader child protection and community-based systems strengthening for 3-5 years, and provide predictable funding that allows for consistent planning, human resourcing, implementation and monitoring;

- Allocate resources for child reintegration in national budgets so that reintegration-specific and reintegration-supportive structures, policies and services can be owned and led by the government where the government is the primary duty bearer; and where necessary, allocate resources for reintegration within humanitarian response and development plans and budgets in contexts where the government may not be the primary duty bearer;

- Publicly disclose funding data on child reintegration, child protection and social services systems-strengthening, to enable consistent analysis of financial reporting across donors (government, multilateral and private) and recipient countries;

- Engage with the Office for Economic Cooperation and Development: Development Assistance Committee and others to consider if reintegration activities and expenditure could be more closely tracked without creating cumbersome procedures. Communication with the Financial Tracking System may also be useful to explore possibilities for the FTS to capture child reintegration more effectively;

- Consider the development of a Global Multi-Country Child Reintegration Pooled Fund with a common framework, indicators and country analysis with defined objectives, approaches, and funding requirements. Options for funding over a minimum three-year period could be explored to make resourcing more predictable and sustainable;

- Engage in dialogue with the UN Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office on opportunities for increasing support for child reintegration under existing Priority Areas. This would have the benefit of increasing attention and funding opportunities whilst promoting strategic and program coherence;

- Make resources available for child reintegration through the World Bank's Global Program for Reintegration Support, leveraging the World Bank's power to convene and strengthening operational synergies between policy, practice and research partners;

Coordination

- Explore the bringing together of private and public sector organizations (UN, NGOs, bilateral) and those with specific expertise towards opportunities to develop and pilot alternative funding initiatives in the context of child reintegration;

At Tindoka vocational centre in South Sudan, the students are taught tailoring, carpentry, brickwork, metalwork, electric work, and plumbing.

- Given the evidence of their potential to increase effectiveness and promote alignment, and commitments made under the Global Funding Compact to increase their use, pooled funds are of growing importance. Options range from the creation of a standalone global pooled fund to increasing the use and volume of resources available for child reintegration through existing instruments. A mix of approaches may be the most optimal as one size will not fit all. However, establishing and maintaining strategic coherence will be important. It is recommended that further detailed design and costing work should be considered in relation to the options outlined in the financing briefing paper.

Recommendations for research

- Fund analysis and research on child reintegration successes and challenges in various contexts, including disaggregated data and qualitative perceptions of children. A further and more detailed analysis of 1-2 priority countries is recommended for a more complete picture of the scale of funding deficits, and the challenges associated with transitioning support across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus and country typologies;

- Establish a research agenda that explores and reality-tests some of the proposed mechanisms towards a deeper understanding of the issues covered in the three briefing papers. This would enhance the ability of stakeholders to create longer-term change. One component to consider is the efficacy of financing instruments and their impact on programming. Greater efforts are also needed to track and assess impacts and outcomes over prolonged periods of time in terms of support provided.

- Fund additional research to better understand the gaps and needs in child reintegration, especially on two fronts:

  – Determining the number of children associated with armed forces and armed groups who require support;

  – Developing a costing methodology that can be used across contexts to estimate reliable 3-5-year programming budgets for community-based reintegration support, accounting for local costs, needs and existing systems and capacities. Apply a developed methodology for costing analysis at the country level to determine reintegration funding gaps and seek to fill these through flexible funding mechanisms as soon as needs arise;

- Agencies establish global monitoring frameworks for reintegration programming across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus;

- Explore opportunities to partner with global and regional research entities to identify evidence that support for child reintegration interventions across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus fosters immediate benefits/outcomes and promotes stability.

"Encourage the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups without any conditions and ensures access to reintegration support for boys and girls without discrimination.

Explanation of Findings of the Briefing Papers

Briefing paper 1: Addressing gaps and needs

The Global Coalition's paper, ***Gaps and Needs of Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups' Successful Reintegration***,[3] considers the barriers that hinder children's successful reintegration. Two significant constraints emerge. First, **programmatic constraints** result from the complexity of reintegration, its multi-sectoral, ever-changing and long-term nature, and the political and structural challenges that impede the effective implementation of reintegration programs. Second, child reintegration programming faces a **financing crisis**, with funding for reintegration decreasing between 2006 and 2016 despite an increasing proliferation of armed conflict around the world.[4] This means that children and families in need are unable to count on support, are less likely to receive the specific services they require, and cannot benefit from peace and stability in their communities.

An approach is needed that strongly encourages the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups *without any conditions* and ensures access to reintegration support for boys and girls *without discrimination*. Children's reintegration is grounded in the fact that children are survivors of human rights violations and should be treated as such.

See full paper here: https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-former-child-soldiers/.

Key findings

To continue good practice and support sustainable reintegration most effectively, any child reintegration program must commence with a multi-dimensional risk analysis, and specifically consider any pre-existing gender dynamics and power dynamics. Community-level leadership and ownership are critical, with donors directly funding local organizations and governments for on-budget reintegration support wherever possible. If it is not possible to directly fund child reintegration, implementing agencies should engage local structures and community leaders as soon as possible, and prepare them to accompany the process and for an eventual handover. Crucially, girls and boys formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups, their peers, families and communities, should be called upon to help design interventions and define metrics of success in reintegration. Community-based child protection case management systems should address the individual needs of children with protection concerns, including survivors of gender-based violence.

Briefing paper 2: Reframing and broadening reintegration

The Global Coalition's paper, ***Reframing Child Reintegration: From the Humanitarian Action to Development, Peacebuilding, Prevention and Beyond***[5] considers the centrality of child reintegration to sustainable development, peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts that mitigate drivers of conflict, reduce risk and strengthen the resilience of individuals and societies. The paper highlights that the reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups should be situated within a better funded, longer-term, more sustainable approach by a **wider range of stakeholders across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus** (HDPN), with particular emphasis on communication and coordination, having a common understanding of what "success" means for the reintegration of children, and establishing common metrics with which to measure it. Reframing child reintegration recognizes the important contribution of successful child reintegration to achieving the SDGs and, reciprocally, of the contribution the SDG achievements can make to child reintegration. Both elements reinforce the ability of conflict-affected countries to be resilient and to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict in the future. The paper explores how affected children

Adolescents learn tailoring in Badakhshan's juvenile rehibition center in the North of Afghanistan.

could be better supported to fully realize their rights as agents of positive change and champions for social and economic development.

See full paper here: https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-former-child-soldiers/.

Key findings

Reframing reintegration recognizes that children and young people are a force for change and renewal; with children formerly associated with armed forces and groups having the potential to make positive contributions to society and galvanize processes for development and peace. Child reintegration programming calls for a defining of a **common theory of change for child reintegration**, whereby multiple stakeholders across sectors and across the HDPN strengthen the mechanisms required to **commit, cooperate and coordinate** so that humanitarian response and more development-oriented approaches coexist as a seamless continuum.

Reframing reintegration posits the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the overarching framework and entry point to address some of the shortcomings of current child reintegration programs. It has a long-term horizon, an integrated, comprehensive and holistic approach, and is predicated on "leaving no one behind" by addressing some of the main drivers of child recruitment.

Briefing paper 3: Funding reintegration

The third briefing paper, *Financing Support for Child Reintegration*, identifies many sources and types of existing and possible funding and financing streams for child reintegration, mapping these instruments in different contexts across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. The paper **explores overall trends**, with a focus on countries or situations on the agenda of the UN Security Council and reported in the Secretary-General's 2019 Report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, and **puts forward a typology of funding contexts** in situations of armed conflict to aid this analysis.

Drawing on some of the key recommendations of these papers, the Global Coalition's paper, *Financing Support for Child Reintegration*, has **three objectives**: 1) To map existing funding and financing flows for child reintegration, 2) to identify and introduce innovative modalities, and 3) to present options, benefits and drawbacks of funding and financing mechanisms and modalities for the future.

See full paper here: https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-former-child-soldiers/.

Key findings

The paper finds that a variety of funding instruments are used to support child reintegration, including UN core funds, bilateral funds, thematic funds, pooled or basket funds, thematic funding and projects, and national budgets. Some successful child reintegration programs have drawn on multiple sources such as core funds, bilateral funds and humanitarian fund appeals which has enabled implementers to creatively ensure a continuity of programming across humanitarian, recovery and development divides, which are often significant. In other cases, multiple source funding has exacerbated the lack of coherence in reintegration efforts and created unbridgeable gaps in securing program resources. Tracking actual levels of expenditure for reintegration has proven to be extremely difficult in practice. Existing funding codes and indicators do not always capture or describe the full extent of activities, especially given the increasing use of pooled or unearmarked funding by donors and where local or national budgets are used to channel and support interventions.

New approaches and instruments have emerged through private sector and philanthropic foundations, and pooled funding has become a significant source of program support. The paper looks at the utility of these and the potential for scale up. It also examines how mechanisms are used to resource different actors and issues related to their effectiveness and responsiveness.

There are significant funding gaps to support child reintegration that if filled would ensure sustainable, predictable and long-term solutions for these children and their communities. These gaps are at times caused by institutional disconnects in financial support associated with the HDPN, which **draws on money from different funding pillars**. This impacts the ability of implementers to provide the recommended **continuum of care** the children desperately need. There are also significant gaps in systematic and predictable reintegration funding across sectors. Short-term funding in certain situations generates additional risk by occasionally triggering inappropriate and/or unsustainable responses. In some circumstances **these could undermine, rather than support, efforts** to establish sustainable service provision over the longer term.

Effective programs need to be able to have a degree of predictability and interconnectedness across the HDPN in order to make the necessary impact on the children. Multi-year and predictable funding crucially allows for the development of relationships at program level between stakeholders, including enhancing national ownership and capacity-building of governments (national and local) where possible and appropriate.

Overall, more funding is clearly needed for reintegration to reach all children in need of services. However, more funding alone will not be enough. Reintegration funding should be flexible and promote individualized care approaches that anticipate the different needs of each child while still being grounded in community-

> "Overall, more funding is clearly needed for reintegration to reach all children in need of services.

based approaches so that the entire community sees value in reintegrating its children. **Funding should be guaranteed** for the duration of reintegration needs for the average child **prior to commencing the support**, recognizing that short-term funding can often generate additional risks.

The financing paper outlines five main options for financing modalities moving forward.[6] In doing so, it takes into account the operating circumstances and typologies in which programs might be seeking to raise and manage finance. The options explored include potential modifications and amendments to existing mechanisms as well as potential new instruments and approaches. The identification and mitigation of potential risks is also identified as a critical consideration in the development of financing mechanisms and instruments, especially in fragile contexts. Inappropriate or poorly coordinated or sequenced funding may undermine stabilization efforts in some cases.

Endnotes

1. Stakeholders consulted ranged from former child soldiers and other survivors of armed conflict, Member States, UN agencies, NGOs and academia, to independent experts and the private sector.

2. They can be found at childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-former-child-soldiers.

3. Available at: childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-former-child-soldiers.

4. https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/link-files/war_child_uk_reintegration_child_soldiers_briefing_paper_web.pdf.

5. Available at: childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-former-child-soldiers.

6. Ibid.

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