

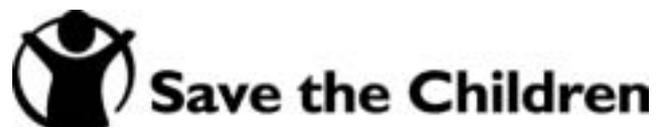
Going Home

Demobilising and reintegrating child soldiers
in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Beth Verhey



“My greatest hope is to go home.”

Patrik, recruited in 1996, at the age of nine

Published by

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While too numerous to name individually, this case study tries to reflect the voices and hopes of the 300 former child soldiers, their families, members of community child protection networks and local associations who shared their experiences and repeatedly asked that all children be demobilised.

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Beth Verhey
February 2003

Abbreviations and acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APROFIME	Association pour la Promotion de la Fille Mere
BUNADER	Bureau National de Démobilisation et Réintégration
BVES	Bureau pour le Volontariat, l'Education et la Sante
CAJED	Concert d'Actions our Jeunes et Enfants Defavorises
CCPN	Community Child Protection Network
CTO	Centre de Transit et d'Orientation
DIVAS	Division of Social Affairs (the Provincial level offices of the Ministry of Social Affairs)
DIVIFAM	Division for Women and Family, Provincial level
DDR	disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DDRRR	disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation or resettlement and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MONUC	United Nations Observer Mission to Congo
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PRA	participatory rapid appraisal
SADC	Solidarity and Actions for Children in Distress
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Armed groups referenced in this paper

*Government forces noted in this paper:**

FAC	Forces Armées Congolaises – the armed forces of the DRC. References are also made in this paper to the AFDL (Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo) and the FAZ (Forces Armées Zaïroises) who now comprise the main troops of the current FAC.
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army (APR is the French acronym)
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defence Force

Non-state parties in the DRC feature constantly evolving alliances and splinters. The list here concerns the main, current groups referred to in this paper:

Banyamulenge	militia representing the Banyamulenge ethnic group
ExFAR	former Rwandese Armed Forces and Interhamwe forces that fled Rwanda in 1994 following the genocide**
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie. The original group has split: RCD-Goma: supported by Rwanda RCD-Kisangani and 'Mouvement de Liberation' (RCD-K/ML); formerly based in Kisangani, supported by governmental forces in Kinshasa and supported by Uganda RCD-'National' (RCD-N); also supported by Uganda
Maï Maï	traditional warriors (also known as Mayi Mayi)
Mongols	some forces operating in particular areas in North Kivu are reported to be alliances between Maï Maï or local ethnic fighters and Interhamwe groups
Mudundu 40	one of four main Maï Maï groups
MLC	Mouvement National de Liberation Congolais

* For further information regarding the various parties to the conflict in DRC, readers should consult various UN reports, such as those from the MONUC peacekeeping operation, or those of human rights organisations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch.

** The exFAR and Interhamwe are organised into ALIR I and ALIR II structures but, generally, reports refer to these forces as 'exFAR and Interhamwe' or simply 'Interhamwe'.

Summary

More than 1,200 child soldiers have been demobilised in the North and South Kivu Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 1999. The process has been gradual but consistent. Save the Children UK has led the majority of the work; the number of operational actors increasing during 2002.

Save the Children statistics – August 1999 to December 2002

- € 968 children demobilised to Save the Children
- € 652 of the 968 have been reintegrated
- € 147 of the reintegrated children have subsequently been re-recruited. However, it should be noted that 62 per cent of those re-recruited were over 18 years old and 69 per cent have been re-recruited in two specific areas featuring a high level of conflict.

The programme in North and South Kivu does not claim to be completely successful. The myriad groups in the region continue to recruit and use children in the conflict. However, the experience demonstrates that, with many remaining constraints, the demobilisation and reintegration of children during ongoing conflict can be achieved.

Lessons learned in this experience are especially important for working with child soldiers in situations of ongoing conflict and with non-state actors. Indeed one of the lessons is the importance of engaging non-state actors in tandem to work with the community. Save the Children has found its child protection training project with military officers and ‘community child protection networks’ to have an important impact.

Programmatically, the most important lessons stress a community-based approach to reintegration. Working directly with communities includes:

- € mobilising for prevention of recruitment and responding to child protection concerns
- € preparing for the return of child soldiers – including analysing where children may face particular protection and security issues
- € identifying appropriate interventions and partners to support the socio-economic reintegration.

During the course of the fieldwork for this paper, some of the main issues were found to be:

- € While there are a number of approach and standards issues to be addressed regarding transit centres and interim care, programmes need to prioritise community level reintegration.
- € Reintegration needs to be viewed more holistically, rather than family reunification and socio-economic activities being viewed as separate phases.
- € One of the dominant critiques investigated during the fieldwork was that the children were inadequately followed up and that ‘the community approach was insufficient’. This critique was found to stem from assumptions that the children rejoined armed groups if they did not receive vocational skill training. To the contrary, through extensive discussions with partners and communities, reintegration strategies that emphasise family livelihood have been found to provide a more tangible impact.

Overlying these issues, the key issues for the future were found to be the need for:

- € a harmonised programme framework – including agreed principles, approaches and clarification of roles and objectives
- € the development of co-ordination structures – nationally but also at the Provincial level – that balance policy and more working-level roles and issues.

The preparation of this paper featured five weeks of field evaluation by the author, an experienced international child protection specialist. It should be noted that the evaluation was conducted in a context of ongoing conflict, and was in fact postponed from October 2002 to early 2003 because of a period of renewed fighting. The fieldwork for the evaluation focused on the relatively long-running work with children associated with fighting forces in North and South Kivu, but included a short comparative mission to Bunia in the disputed Ituri District of Province Orientale. The fieldwork included extensive independent discussions and focus groups with demobilised children, local organisations, community child protection networks, partners and key stakeholders.

Save the Children commissioned this work as an independent, external evaluation and as a lesson learning exercise. As such, this paper is primarily a documentation of the child soldier programme work of Save the Children.* However, Save the Children works extensively through local partners and the full range of partners involved in pursuing the demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers is vital to the work. Thus this paper seeks to present an inclusive view of the work with child soldiers in North and South Kivu, including some of the debates between different partners and actors.

* The Swedish Government, the British Government, and Comic Relief have been the main donors for this work.

Chapter 1

Background and context regarding the recruitment and use of children in DRC

The work with child soldiers described in this paper is situated within the complex conflict in DRC since August 1998.¹ The purpose of this paper is to describe the Save the Children programme with child soldiers and does not attempt to describe the conflict itself. However, it is important to highlight that the conflict features numerous and frequently shifting non-state armed groups, that the armed forces of at least five other African countries have been actively involved and that the control and exploitation of natural resources is as important a factor in the conflict as political and military objectives.

Observers note that child soldiers are a relatively new phenomenon for DRC – the first observations were during the 1996 and 1997 conflict when the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL) succeeded in overthrowing the regime of Mobutu Sésé Seko. The number of child soldiers in DRC is unknown. Estimates range as high as 25,000 but many children will never be counted. This is especially the case with girls, thousands of whom are being used by armed groups but are not considered, locally, to be ‘child soldiers’.

On the other hand, some unique points have helped advocacy efforts on child soldiers in DRC. The DRC was one of the first States to ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to declare 18 as the minimum age for recruitment.² Debates over age have often been a significant hindrance in previous child soldier programmes. It is also noteworthy that the series of peace and cease-fire agreements – the first being Lusaka in July 1999³ – have consistently stressed the obligation of armed groups to neither recruit nor use children and to ensure their demobilisation. Another unique feature in DRC has been the inclusion of child protection advisors within the UN peacekeeping mission (United Nations Observer Mission to Congo – MONUC). This has contributed to the degree of advocacy on the issue with the various armed groups.

Indeed international pressure regarding child recruitment has achieved some results in DRC. A number of armed groups, including the government, have made pledges to UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict to stop recruiting children and to release those who have been recruited. While adherence to international law and commitments has been problematic, in June 2000 the government issued a decree⁴ calling for the demobilisation and reinsertion of all vulnerable groups, including child soldiers. The RCD-Goma, (RCD is the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie) the main armed group in North and South Kivu, had issued a decree in May 2000, declaring their commitment to not recruit children less than 18 years and to support their demobilisation and reintegration. Save the Children and partners are also beginning to achieve progress in efforts to engage some of the armed groups known as Mai Mai and other non-state groups, as described later in this paper.

Despite these advocacy achievements, preventing recruitment and ensuring demobilisation of child soldiers has been more problematic. Following intensive advocacy efforts led by UNICEF, the government of DRC demobilised a pilot group of 280 child soldiers, including a few girls, near Kinshasa in December 2001. Among numerous shortfalls, an external evaluation of this experience emphasises the absence of reintegration plans for children beyond a three-month

period of time in a transit centre.⁵ Further, the Save the Children urban programme in Kinshasa was able to document that a number of children who had been released from the army were re-recruited for this ‘demobilisation’ exercise. The main role of Save the Children in the Kinshasa pilot experience was to give training and technical guidance to the local partner providing the social work staff to the transit centre. This paper focuses on the more extensive Save the Children child soldier work in North and South Kivu.

Importantly, opportunities for achieving the release of child soldiers are increasing. It is hoped that with the evaluation of the government pilot demobilisation in Kinshasa and this documentation of the Save the Children programme in North and South Kivu,⁶ future programming for child soldiers in DRC will benefit from lessons learned and from harmonised approaches.

Patrik’s story

“I am originally from Maniema Province. Since the AFDL in 1996, at nine years old, I enrolled voluntarily with my friends. We fought a long time on the front lines and one day we were captured by the RCD. We then fought with the RCD to dislodge the Mayi Mayi forces.

Us children experienced many difficulties, many perished and many others were gravely wounded. During this period, everyone ignored the right of children to leave the army.

In May 2002 I fell ill and our Commander sent me to Bukavu for care. I took advantage of being in Bukavu to ask to be demobilised. I was taken to the Save the Children/DIVAS [Division of Social Affairs] transit center where I received food, lodging and health care. Despite this care, my greatest hope is to go home.”

1.1. DDR in the context of DRC

It is important to situate the work with child soldiers in DRC into the lexicon of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration – DDR. In DRC, the acronym DDORR (disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, resettlement or repatriation) is used in addition to the traditional acronym of DDR. This arises because of the foreign forces that will be repatriated to their country of origin or resettled as part of the envisioned peace process. Children are likely to be among forces participating in the various DDR processes, but, in the meantime, efforts are being made to demobilise and reintegrate children separately as a priority.

Reinsertion may form another ‘R’ – reinsertion is considered an initial, short-term package of assistance to meet the basic needs of demobilised soldiers. This may include food and household items upon arrival in the home community or area of resettlement. In this paper, and in the working terms of the programme in North and South Kivu, the traditional term and acronym DDR is used.

Various documents and discussions on child soldiers in DRC emphasise a number of terms in addition to demobilisation and reintegration. Other terms include: identification, verification, relocation, reorientation, family reunification, social reinsertion, socio-economic reinsertion, community reintegration and follow-up. However, the elements of work with child soldiers cannot be portrayed or pursued as a linear process. For example, work with the community to facilitate family tracing is an ongoing dynamic that should include: discussing any mediation efforts that will be necessary; identifying appropriate education and other activities for

demobilised child soldiers; raising awareness to resist future efforts of child recruitment; and mobilising community leaders to help redress any cases of recruitment or re-recruitment.

In addition to the experiences noted above, the only other formal demobilisation activities have been the pilot demobilisation and reinsertion of some 800 ‘vulnerable groups’ from the Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC) in August to October 2002. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has implemented this pilot project under an agreement with the World Bank and the government. ‘Vulnerable groups’ demobilised in this project, which also stems from the June 2000 Décret-Loi 066, include military widows, orphans and those who are disabled or war-injured.

1.2. Profile of children being demobilised

From the first experience in 1999, there has been broad agreement that child soldiers are those under 18 years of age. The youngest child soldier demobilised was eight years old at the time of demobilisation, but 82 per cent of the cases have been 15 years or older. However, it is important to note that it was not possible to calculate the ages of the children at the time of their recruitment for this paper due to improvements needed in the Save the Children database system. Some children have been involved in armed groups since 1996 and many have been involved for three or more years.

Figure 1: Age at time of demobilisation

	10 or <	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
No. of cases in North Kivu	06	07	09	34	44	84	107	55	0
No. of cases in South Kivu	01	02	04	17	58	138	199	182	36
Total	07	09	13	51	102	222	306	237	36

Regarding the different armed groups, the great majority of child soldiers demobilised have been with the RCD-Goma. Geographically, the RCD-Goma is headquartered in Goma, North Kivu Province, and extends through South Kivu Province and some areas of Maniema, Province Orientale and North Katanga. It should be noted that the child soldier demobilisation programme has gained the most progress with various individual RCD-Goma leaders in Bukavu and Goma.

In other words, the great majority of demobilisations have occurred near Bukavu and Goma towns, with very limited progress in more far-reaching areas. This has been due to a number of reasons including security, accessibility and slow progress on the part of RCD-Goma authorities to influence their network of commanders. Save the Children has begun to detach a team member to Uvira, another town in South Kivu, and Kalemie, a town in the north of Katanga Province, to extend advocacy follow-up with local authorities and support the efforts of local organisations.

Some of the children released by the RCD-Goma were involved in other groups before becoming part of the RCD-Goma. This highlights the fluid nature of the armed groups and that children, especially those with any previous training, are simply used by armed groups due to the need for manpower.

Figure 2: History of child soldier involvement by armed group

	RCD-G	Maï Maï	AFDL > RCD-G	Maï Maï > RCD-G	Local Defense/ RCD-G ⁷	Mongols	APR ⁸	Total
South Kivu	399	127	20	19	72	-	-	637
North Kivu	164	-	62	54	-	64	2	346
Total	563	127	82	73	72	64	2	983

While this profile information is available from Save the Children data, the total number of children demobilised in North and South Kivu is more than 1,200. Since 2002, other child protection partners have opened transit centres and expanded the work with child soldiers.

Figure 3: Demobilisation by reception point as of 31 December 2002⁹

Save the Children-DIVAS Bukavu	637
Save the Children-CAJED ¹⁰ Goma	180
Save the Children-Don Bosco Goma	20
Other Don Bosco Goma	127
Save the Children-DIVAS Goma	145
SOS Grands Lacs Goma	72
BVES ¹¹ Bukavu	98
Total	1,279

Further, the above figures are a significant under-reporting of the work with child soldiers. For example, to date, local partners in different areas of South Kivu have identified 539 so-called ‘self-demobilised’ children. Such children are extremely difficult to identify as most live clandestinely in fear of being accused as deserters. However, a number of local partners working with Save the Children have begun to reach these children and many are supported at the community level. Other cases that add to the full picture of work with child soldiers include a number of situations where the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has directly been able to facilitate family reunification.

The question of girls

Very few girls have been demobilised and this remains a priority concern for the future. Only nine girls have been demobilised to date – five with the first group in 1999 and four during 2001. Save the Children and local organisations find that very few girls are ‘visible’ as soldiers but thousands are thought to be involved in armed groups in other capacities – including domestic support work, as porters or messengers and as concubines. Sexual exploitation in all its forms is widespread.¹²

Angelique’s story

At 15, Angelique and some of her friends refused the advances of a youth in their quartier to become his lover. One day, this boy announced to the community that it was revealed to him in a dream that the girls were planning acts of sorcery against him. The girls fled and joined the RCD-Goma with the objective of later seeking revenge.

Angelique remained with the RCD-Goma for a brief time before being demobilised to Save the Children. Before reunifying Angelique, Save the Children worked with the family and community to be sure she would be accepted. She was finally reintegrated without any problems.

Through broader child protection work with local partners, a few 'self-demobilised' girls have also been identified. For example, the local partner working with vulnerable girls in North Kivu, Association pour la Promotion de la Fille Mere (APROFIME), has worked with six girls who had been forcibly recruited and were able to run away. They all served for six months in domestic support functions and were sexually exploited. It is likely that some girls included in the work of other local partners have also been involved in armed groups at some time but remain reticent about revealing their experiences.

There are indications that girls involved in armed groups are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised. The first five girls demobilised in 1999 were reunified with their families very quickly, but profile information on the other four girls demobilised in 2001 gives some indication of this pattern. Two of the four girls had earlier been forced out of their homes when they were accused of sorcery¹³ and one had earlier been incited to leave home and begin prostituting herself. The fourth had been cohabiting with a boy soldier and followed him when he joined an armed group, but she chose to be demobilised as others regularly harassed her in the armed group.

It has been difficult, indeed even contentious, to include the question of girls in advocacy discussions with various political and military authorities. Save the Children and local organisations in the North and South Kivu programme report that the encouragement of girls by their families to join is very rare and that the stigma, especially of an unmarried girl, having been associated with military men creates extremely difficult challenges for reintegrating girls.

1.3. How children have been demobilised

The great majority of child soldiers have been demobilised in a quasi-official manner. In most cases, individual commanders either bring children to a transit centre or contact Save the Children, or a partner organisation, asking them to fetch the child soldiers. In some cases, the commander acts following his own training and awareness raising through the programme. In other cases, children are released after being captured or detained and accused of desertion or other infraction.

In the cases where child soldiers are captured or detained, some are demobilised through the sensitisation of a given commander or other official, but others are released following advocacy by child protection organisations active in visiting prisons and military detainment locations. Indeed, access to such locations is a result of the advocacy efforts.

Through discussions with children in the transit centres, it has been found that some children learned about the demobilisation programme, or about the law that children under 18 should not be recruited, and sought out demobilisation. Interestingly, a number of children reported hearing about demobilisation on the radio. Some took the opportunities of visiting ICRC, Save the Children or other humanitarian organisations to request demobilisation. Some were able to approach their commanders to request demobilisation. Others simply used their knowledge of demobilisation of children to gain the courage to run away and later sought assistance, especially in obtaining official demobilisation documents.

While demobilisation has not been formal in the sense of a full-scale action by the RCD-Goma, or any other group, it is considered official and includes formal recognition in the form of demobilisation orders. From the beginning, Save the Children made arrangements with the RCD-Goma military authorities to issue individual demobilisation documents for each child as a

form of protection against re-recruitment (see annexes). The level of official demobilisation has also been facilitated by a number of formal statements issued by the RCD-Goma since the beginning of the programme. For example, early in the programme, an instruction was issued to the RCD-Goma military by the group's Vice President to stop any recruitment under the age of 18 and to follow the provisory protection measure of not deploying anyone under 18 to the front lines while awaiting their demobilisation.

The most official instance of child soldier demobilisation occurred in North Kivu in April 2002. On this occasion, the RCD-Goma demobilised 104 children from Mushaki, a military training camp near Goma. The Mushaki demobilisation was the first, and only, formal implementation of the plan of action signed by the RCD-Goma with UNICEF in December 2001. In this plan of action, the RCD-Goma confirmed its pledge to not recruit children under 18 years and provided a figure of 2,600 children in their ranks for whom they would facilitate demobilisation and reintegration in collaboration with UNICEF and child protection partners.

As described above, official demobilisation has also been facilitated for a number 'self-demobilised' children – children who escaped of left armed groups on their own accord. In discussions with various transit centres during this evaluation, most staff confirm that they verify the situation of a child and that he is a former soldier before accepting him into the centre. This is important for maintaining entry criteria for the centre. Staff report it is fairly easy to verify if the child is a former soldier by assessing his knowledge of different commanders and even checking information with other children in the centre.

It should also be noted that children have been disarmed by the RCD-Goma fairly routinely as part of their demobilisation. Thus there have not been any particular reports of problems with children in transit centres who have retained their arms. This is important to note as there were such problems in the pilot demobilisation of 280 children near Kinshasa in late 2001.

Notes

¹ The current conflict in DRC relates to the conflict starting in November 1996 that resulted in the overthrow of the regime of Mobutu Sésé Seko by the forces of the AFDL (Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo). This paper concentrates on the child soldier work begun in mid-1999 in North and South Kivu and the phase of the conflict devastating DRC since August 1998.

² The Optional Protocol is to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and was adopted in May 2000. The DRC signed the Optional Protocol in September 2000 but the Protocol entered into force in February 2002. Other key international legal instruments signed by DRC include the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, signed in March 2001, and the 1999 ILO Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, signed in June 2001.

³ The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement can be found as UN Security Council document: S/1999/815 of 23 July 1999.

⁴ Décret-Loi 066 'portant démobilisation et réinsertion des groupes vulnérables présents au sein des forces combattantes'.

⁵ 'Evaluation de la phase pilote du programme de démobilisation et réinsertion des enfants soldats dans la région de Kinshasa', by Sylvie Bodineau, Consultant, UNICEF et BUNADER, Novembre 2002.

⁶ This document features a number of children's stories and quotes. For protection reasons, their names and other key identifying details have been changed.

⁷ Local Defense forces were a fairly recent pattern in South Kivu where the RCD-Goma encouraged local leaders to mobilise a form of community militia.

⁸ Rwandan Patriotic Army (APR is the French acronym).

⁹ The reception points listed in this table are the transit centres operating in Bukavu and Goma; with the Save the Children-DIVAS transit centre in Bukavu being the first and only centre operating for some time. The transit centres are described more fully in Chapter 4.

¹⁰ CAJED is the Concert d'Actions our Jeunes et Enfants Defavorises

¹¹ BVES is the Bureau pour le Volontariat, l'Education et la Sante

¹² For further reporting on sexual violence and exploitation, see: 'The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo', Human Rights Watch, June 2002.

¹³ Children accused of witchcraft is a worrying and growing phenomenon in DRC. Save the Children is one of the few organisations working on this issue and readers may contact the Kinshasa office for further information. Save the Children, Avenue de l'Avenir 10, Concession Chanic, Commune Ngaliema, Kinshasa, DRC, Tel:00 243 9905087, Fax: 08701 300792, Email: Sskin-admin@jobantech.cd

Chapter 2

Background of Save the Children's work in DRC

Save the Children's work with child soldiers in DRC has the advantage of building on a number of years of child protection work and partnerships in the region. Since 1994, Save the Children's work in North and South Kivu has focused on separated children.¹ During the period 1996 to early 1998, Save the Children was able to build an extensive network of local organisations participating in work with separated children and in child protection more generally.

During 1998, Save the Children initiated a series of studies on the situation of vulnerable children in North and South Kivu with the aim of developing a broader child protection programme. Specific sectors of intervention were identified: separated children, street children, children affected by HIV and girls in situations of exploitation. The child protection programme was reoriented to identify two local partners per area of intervention.² Most of the local partners selected had been part of the network working on separated children issues since 1996, but now the partners entered into more formal agreements and funding arrangements with Save the Children. Partnerships with provincial authorities also continued – emphasising the Division of Social Affairs (known as DIVAS) and Division for Women and Family (known as DIVIFAM).³

This programme orientation developed during 1999 and was referred to as the social protection programme. The evolution of the Save the Children social protection programme and development of community child protection networks (CCPNs) is presented here because it provided an important base of experience towards determining strategies and approaches for reintegrating child soldiers.

2.1. Community child protection networks

As described above, the Save the Children social protection programme selected specific local partners. Save the Children provided training, technical assistance, advocacy collaboration and funding to the partners, (whereas in the past collaboration and financial or material assistance had been more informal and on a case-by-case basis). The new social protection programme established partnership agreements with each local non-governmental organisation (NGO) outlining agreed child protection approaches and principles.

The activities of the partners in the social protection programme were primarily: social outreach and mediation with vulnerable families and their children; non-formal education and literacy; and low scale skills training (such as embroidery, sewing, carpentry and low scale animal husbandry) aimed at facilitating the income generation capacity of the children. The non-formal education and skills training activities have come to be called micro-projects. This is due in part to the way they receive specific funding from Save the Children in addition to the broader partnership agreement.

Following concerns and observations of the Save the Children team, two consultants were engaged (April to July 2000) to evaluate and help reorient the programme. One of the central concerns was that the effectiveness of the micro-projects was difficult to ascertain and, more importantly, the micro-projects were found not to have an impact on the protection concerns of the children nor to contribute to the prevention of abuses. For example, for a victim of rape or a 'girl mother',⁴ learning embroidery or sewing does not protect her (or other girls) from the same

abuse; or, for a street child or demobilised child soldier, learning carpentry does not necessarily protect him from re-recruitment or prevent recruitment violations of other children. The skills training projects of the partners had very limited or non-existent plans to facilitate actual income generation for their beneficiaries. Further, the Save the Children team grew concerned that the children benefiting from the micro-projects came to be considered ‘special children’ within the community. This created the risk that the approach was a source of conflict in the community and may disfavour reintegration.

It is important to bear in mind the socio-economic context of the programme. In addition to more than six years of armed conflict and displacement, the population of North and South Kivu suffered nearly 30 years of economic development neglect by the regime in Kinshasa. Virtually all families suffer from extreme poverty, exacerbated by the conflict, such that assistance efforts for especially vulnerable children have to carefully balance community realities. Thus, a risk in the social protection programme’s approach was that children might, for example, enrol in armed groups or engage in prostitution in order to later participate in the skills activities.

The conclusion of the evaluation in 2000 was to work more directly with communities to ensure a non-preferential approach in child protection. This conclusion was also based on the recognition that local NGO partners, and humanitarian organisations generally, tend to develop programmes for the more ‘visible’ vulnerable children (such as street children and child soldiers) while other ‘sub-groups’ of vulnerable children, especially girls, remain excluded and neglected.

The key result of the 2000 evaluation was the initiation of CCPNs. In fact the idea for the networks grew from Save the Children’s experience in a rural community in North Kivu. A local child protection committee was created as part of the efforts with a centre housing some 50 children. The centre’s founder, the wife of a customary chief, was virtually holding the children hostage, refusing them family reunification or placement in foster families. Over time, the local committee and Save the Children were able to place the children in more appropriate situations and close the centre.

Working through community networks has been found to have the following advantages:

- € It mobilises a comprehensive approach at the community level: integrating health, nutrition, physical security, economic poverty and issues of discrimination, cultural identity and protection.
- € It facilitates community ownership in that the network is part of the community and works for and with that community.

For future programme actors, it is important to caution that the development of, and work with, CCPN is an extensive process. In the initial phases, work at this community level requires greater staff resources than traditional programme approaches of funding and supporting local associations.

What are community child protection networks?

The term ‘network’ in English may conjure ideas of a broad (including geographically broad) grouping. It is important to emphasise that each CCPN is specific to a given community and is defined by that community. In similar programmes in other countries, Save the Children has used the term ‘committee’, but the term ‘network’ best captures the informal nature of the CCPNs.

Save the Children has developed the following definition for the networks:

“Community child protection networks (CCPNs or ‘networks’) are a forum where community members meet, discuss child protection problems and research solutions. The CCPN is an informal structure, representing all social sectors of the community, including children. The overall aim of the CCPN is to improve the physical and social security of their community members, giving particular attention to vulnerable families and children. The objectives include:

- € preventing and protecting children from all forms of abuse
- € promoting advocacy for the protection and development of children
- € disseminating and promoting the rights of children and legal protection instruments.”

In 2000, Save the Children identified four rural communities, considered to be among the most war-affected, for the establishment of the first networks. Save the Children targeted communities where they were already working, including through emergency assistance or health and nutrition work. This facilitated efficiencies since the networks prioritised school and health centre rehabilitation as being activities that benefited all children. (Such activities are further discussed in section 5.4 in this report.) Today, there are eleven CCPNs, one each in Bukavu and Goma and the remaining nine in more rural communities.⁵

Role of Save the Children in initiating the networks

The process of initiating and working with CCPNs is extensive because the community itself determines membership, criteria, roles and activities. The first step for Save the Children is to meet with the local authorities, both civil and traditional, to present their intentions and discuss the child protection needs of the community. Save the Children has found the involvement of local civilian authorities and traditional chiefs to be a key determinant of protection work at the community level because they have the strongest level of influence on the community.⁶ Save the Children strives carefully to play a role of facilitator and resource. Its principle role is to reinforce the CCPN’s capacity through training, advocacy support and participatory research using participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) and other tools.

In summary, Save the Children undertakes the following steps in initiating, facilitating and supporting the networks:

- € After identifying the community or general area, Save the Children approaches the local authorities to present its intentions, child protection approach and to ask them to facilitate subsequent meetings with local leaders and representatives of various community structures.
- € Numerous meetings take place to present Save the Children’s approach and discuss child protection concerns with the various community structures. The idea of the network is discussed as well as introducing the idea of criteria for representation on the network.
- € An open community meeting is arranged where the role and criteria for the network are established and elections convened to determine the representatives to the network.
- € Training and information sessions are provided to the members of the network to further discuss their role, mission, approach and to identify specific themes for training sessions. Save the Children uses this opportunity as a mini-evaluation of the level of understanding on child protection issues and capacities of the community and network.

Who comprises the networks?

While each network is unique, membership levels range from 25 to 40 and members commonly represent:

- ∄ local authorities (both civil authorities and traditional chiefs)
- ∄ religious leaders
- ∄ children
- ∄ representatives of service sectors, such as health, education, sports and culture
- ∄ representatives of key economic activities⁷ or associations
- ∄ representatives of local NGOs and initiatives, including women's associations.

Each sector of the community elects its own representatives. Representatives are often the more educated community members, such as nurses and teachers, but the process ensures representation of all sectors, including children, women and older persons. Indeed Save the Children has found it important to expressly raise the participation of children. One lesson learned from discussions with children is that they prefer to have their own forums and that those forums have established linkages with adults.

While an open process to define criteria for membership is undertaken with each community, the criteria are commonly characteristics such as: honesty, to be non-conflictual, to demonstrate a sense of collaboration, to be legitimate in the eyes of the community, discretion, rapport with children, a voluntary spirit and a capacity for analysis.

The criterion of legitimacy highlights one of the advantages of working with the networks: identifying appropriate partners for child protection activities. Unfortunately, Save the Children and other organisations have had some difficult experiences with corruption and misuse of funds. In some cases, CCPNs have refused to include certain local NGOs as members. Some of these local NGOs were otherwise well known but the network explained that they did not have legitimate activities in the community. For example, in one case, the leadership of a local NGO had sold the humanitarian assistance which they were supposed to distribute to displaced families.

Clement's story

"Since 1996, at 10 years old, I was recruited. I fought a long time at the front. In 1999, as part of a group of malnourished children, I was taken to the hospital in Kisangani. There were around 80 of us originally from North and South Kivu. The ICRC negotiated our demobilisation with the chief military officer and organised our transportation. We were received by Save the Children in Goma.

I was finally reintegrated with my parents in November 2001, but there was a land dispute between a commander in our area and my parents. This commander started harassing me because our demobilisation orders from Kisangani had not been countersigned in Goma. I fled to the bush.

Three months later I found a community child protection network in a nearby village. This network brought me back to Save the Children in Goma. In August 2002, having learned that this commander left our village, the network went to see my family and the local authorities. Finally, I was able to go home and all the neighbours were very happy."

This is an important lesson for future programmes. There is a proliferation of local NGOs in DRC. Many are genuine and have admirable origins in responding to decades of deterioration of basic services. However, many others exist only in name and comprise part of a complex pattern

where individuals establish NGOs as a means of self-employment. Unfortunately, one of the results is an environment of competition between local NGOs, and international organisations have to be careful to avoid being manipulated.

Roles and activities of the networks

Bearing in mind the challenges of the local NGO environment, it has been important to emphasise that the networks remain informal and do not become local NGOs themselves. They meet, work together and often have Presidents, Secretaries and other officers, but they do not constitute themselves as a formal organisation. Save the Children has chosen not to sign partnership agreements with the networks in order to underscore their open, informal nature.

As a forum for promoting and improving child protection, CCPNs undertake a variety of roles in the areas of prevention, awareness raising, advocacy and responsive action:

- € The networks prevent abuses and violations through advocacy and awareness raising. They analyse and disseminate child protection information in their communities and identify risks. For example, they raise awareness regarding separated children and the rights of children not to be recruited and they promote access to education.
- € The networks respond to child protection cases, they denounce abuses against children and defend and promote children's rights. They seek to mobilise the community and any members responsible for violations.
- € Further, the networks identify the needs and interests of the community to improve the wellbeing of their children. Save the Children works with the networks to undertake participatory research on issues such as access to health, education and nutrition services. The results of such research facilitate the identification of priority needs, and micro-projects may be developed with the community as a result.

Highlights of the impact of the networks

In focus groups conducted for this paper, community members and members of the networks consistently noted that the initiation of the network has empowered them to undertake protection actions for their children which they had previously felt impossible. One source of empowerment they highlighted was the legitimacy they have with local authorities (due to the transparency of their work). Numerous specific points and examples of impact were noted by the Save the Children team, partners, the networks and children themselves, including:

- € One network intervened to prevent the kidnapping of children from schools for recruitment.
- € A network contributed to local peace negotiations between different armed groups in order to facilitate humanitarian access.
- € One network advocated for the incorporation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the school curriculum and initiated a student child rights advocacy group.
- € Tolerance has improved and alternative solutions found to situations where poor parents cannot pay school fees.
- € The networks have been able to redress specific cases of recruitment and re-recruitment through direct negotiation by a delegation of the network with local authorities and commanders. In more difficult cases, Save the Children is contacted to support their advocacy and negotiation, including through contacts with provincial authorities.

- € Overall, areas with networks are observed to have a reduced incidence of child recruitment. Networks have written letters of protest to various authorities regarding patterns of recruitment and child rights abuses. In particular, where quotas prompted the recruitment of children, communities and families are able to resist such exhortations.

In fact, in focus group discussions with CCPNs for this paper, they report that the networks have made significant impacts on child protection issues in their communities. They report that as a group, they have found the strength to speak out about recruitment or other rights violations, yet when they were individual parents or neighbours, they did not feel empowered to do so.

Strengths and weaknesses of working with community networks

The networks have proven to be a key factor in ensuring an effective community approach to child protection. Some strengths and weaknesses to highlight include:

Strengths:

- € The networks efficiently and effectively raise awareness on child protection issues.
- € Members of the network can immediately identify and respond to abuses against children and advocate on their behalf with local authorities. The networks, even more than a local NGO, ensure consistent monitoring and follow-up as they are an integral part of the community.
- € The networks have improved the collaboration between local authorities and associations.

Weaknesses:

- € Some networks remain too dependent on Save the Children. The analysis of the Save the Children team is that conflict and poverty have worn down traditional community solidarity such that communities feel hopeless regarding their own capacity to redress child protection problems.
- € Networks often have exaggerated expectations of Save the Children in terms of the organisation's resources. These are addressed through participatory research to identify priorities and feasible activities, but this process is relatively time-consuming.
- € While all networks have child representatives, genuine participation of children is weak. Child participation should be better addressed in future programmes.

Thus while the CCPNs have contributed greatly to appropriate and effective work with vulnerable children, Save the Children has found it important to caution other programme actors that initiating and working with the CCPNs is an extensive and dynamic process. Save the Children is concerned that the networks risk being misused or misapplied – in the context of the numerous organisations seeking local partners for emergency response work – especially by international actors (in view of the challenges regarding competition between more formal local structures).

2.2. Learning from the first demobilisation experience in 1999

In May 1999, the Save the Children child protection programme in Bukavu was contacted by the Governor of South Kivu to help reintegrate a group of 120 child soldiers. Save the Children was informed that the child soldiers were part of a group of Mai Mai fighters captured by the RCD-Goma. Discussions proceeded slowly as some commanders disagreed with the Governor's intent to demobilise the children and return them to their families – usually armed groups seek to incorporate captured fighters into their own forces. However, Save the Children was able to use the opportunity to discuss and gain from the provincial political and military authorities, the commitment in principle to demobilise child soldiers.

Finally, in August 1999, an agreement was signed between Save the Children, the South Kivu Governor's office and DIVAS to begin the programme. DIVAS provided a building to serve as the transit centre and 66 children – including five girls – were demobilised by the '6th Brigade' of the RCD-Goma. Save the Children was not able to get explanations for the absence of the rest of the group of 120 originally proposed, and most of children had in fact been with RCD-Goma forces rather than Mai Mai groups.

In the following months, Save the Children engaged an external consultant and a number of local consultants, and conducted local research activities to determine the most appropriate next steps for the child soldiers. A number of important lessons were learned in the first days and months of the programme.

Transit centre lessons learned

The building donated for the transit centre by DIVAS was quickly found to be inappropriate. Most importantly, it lacked a space for activities for the children and space to ensure separate quarters for girls and boys. Save the Children identified a new building in a more residential quarter and with capacity for up to 300 children.

However, important lessons in community relations were immediately learned upon the move to the new transit centre. About a week after the move, early on a Saturday evening, a group of neighbours threw stones at a group of staff and children relaxing at the entrance. Military patrolling the area quickly intervened and calmed the situation. The next day, the head of the Save the Children child protection team went to investigate and talk to the neighbours, children and other community members. The neighbours and community members expressed a variety of concerns. Some thought the transit centre was a re-education camp for combatants, some were upset that the building was not used as a school to benefit the community and others wondered if children at the centre benefited from better treatment (games, medical care, food, etc) than their own children.

In order to remedy the situation, a number of actions were taken. A meeting was organised with community representatives to ensure the demobilisation programme was fully explained, messages were prepared for dissemination in churches and religious groups and community members visited the transit centre to witness its realities and to show the children they were accepted. Joint recreational activities for the children in the transit centre and community were organised and have become an integral part of the programme. All of these changes are felt to enhance the programme and ensure that the transit centre becomes the starting point for community and family reintegration.

Other important lessons regarding activities for the centre were learned in the first months of the programme. In October 1999, Save the Children engaged two local consultants to study and put in place an education programme for the transit centre. It was quickly recognised that the majority of children were opposed to the programme and it had to be revised. Initially, the programme was too formal as most of the children had not attended school for at least three years. The children were preoccupied with going home. The daily programme at the transit centre now emphasises recreational and skills activities in the afternoons while the education activities in the morning are organised by levels of literacy and include catch-up courses for those children who may be able to reintegrate into formal schooling.

Reintegration lessons learned

Save the Children and partners had significant family tracing and reunification experience, but the team was unsure how long children would need to stay at the transit centre. Owing to some of the specific experiences of the children, doing advance family tracing and preparing the family and community for reunification was quickly recognised as essential. Through the first group of demobilised children, Save the Children and partners found that the average length of stay in the transit centre was eight to ten weeks. This depended on several factors including the duration and remoteness of family separation, security issues and, in a few cases, community attitudes towards the return of the child.

Save the Children found family reunification to be the priority concern of the demobilised children and an important first step in reintegration. In fact, it was found that the majority of the children had maintained some contacts with their families and wanted to be reunited as soon as possible. Most of the work before family reunification was to assess any issues the child would face in his community and to prepare the family and community to welcome the child. Further, the programme found that family and community reunification most quickly restored the protection and relationships important to the child's recovery.

Reintegration activities in addition to family reunification were also investigated. In November 1999, Save the Children engaged local consultants to help develop strategies and approaches for the reintegration of the children.⁸ Two communities which were the community of origin for a major portion of the children were identified for focused discussions and analysis. Before commencing the November 1999 study, the Save the Children team was planning to prepare 'reintegration kits' for each child. The 'kits' were anticipated to include items such as clothes, soap, kitchen sets, seeds and tools. Importantly, the study and discussions with the communities were clear that, rather than individual 'kits', reintegration required a community-based approach with an emphasis on family livelihood activities and efforts to extend education and health benefits to all vulnerable children.

Notes

¹ Other sectors for Save the Children are in the areas of nutrition/health and food security/emergency assistance. Save the Children expanded nationally in DRC with the opening in Kinshasa of a child protection programme in 1998.

² For reference for readers who are more familiar with North and South Kivu, the local NGO partners in South Kivu were: Actions pour le Développement et l'Encadrement des Jeunes Deseouvres et Artisans (ADEJEDA) and Solidarity and Actions for Children in Distress (SACD) for street children; Fondation Femme Plus (FFP) and Forum d'assistance pour le Orphelins Victimes de SIDA et Seropositifs (FORSE) for children affected by HIV; and

Actions pour le Développement et la Paix entre les Ethnies (ADEPAE) and COPARE for non-formal and peace education activities. In North Kivu: CAJED and Maison-Amani for street children; Programme de lutte contre la Pauvreté et la Misère (PAMI) and Mouvement International des Droits de l'Enfant, de la Femme, de l'Homme veuf et de leur Promotion Social (MIDFEHOPS) for children affected by HIV, APROFIME and APFD for girls in exploitative situations.

³ In DRC, the administrative structure of government ministries, such as Social Affairs, Health, Education, etc, is to have Divisions for each Province. The Division staff report through their Provincial Governor but are technical staff rather than politically-appointed. Thus most Divisional staff have remained in their posts despite fluctuations in the political or armed group in control of their Province.

⁴ In DRC, the French term 'fille mere' has become common. This refers to females less than 18 years of age who have become mothers – either through rape, prostitution or other exploitative relationships – outside of marriage.

⁵ The rural CCPNs are in Bunyakiri, Kavumu, Kaziba and Nyangezi in South Kivu and Kitchanga, Matanda, Minova (with an extension in Sake), Mweso and Nyakariba in North Kivu. The urban CCPNs are Nyamiera in Bukavu and Keshero in Goma.

⁶ Perhaps the most important local, traditional authorities in many parts of North and South Kivu are Mwami. The authority and influence of the Mwami is very strong in the community, even if difficult to define. For example, these traditional chiefs control and manage all land allocation through hereditary and other customs. Non-residents, such as internally displaced persons, must go through an interlocutor who has favour with the Mwami to access land. This situation remains the reality after decades of State laws and structures.

⁷ For example, many networks have representatives of types of commerce such as truck owners and traders.

⁸ This was 'Rapport de l'Enquête sur la Réinsertion Sociale des Enfants Démobilisés de l'Armée', Save the Children UK, Bukavu, South Kivu, November 1999.

Chapter 3

Getting to demobilisation: advocacy, mobilisation and co-ordination

3.1. Advocacy and prevention

A multifaceted and consistent effort is needed to advocate for the release of child soldiers, prevent recruitment and promote community level understanding and action in child protection. One of the most important lessons of the Save the Children work for child soldiers to date is the need to work on community mobilisation and engagement of armed groups in tandem. In fact, Save the Children defines advocacy as actions to influence the political-military authorities and local communities to respect children's rights.

In documenting the experience of the programme since 1999, it is important to note that the Save the Children approach was different from the approach pursued by UNICEF. This created tension, and the collaboration shortfalls were finally being redressed in late 2002. (Collaboration and co-ordination issues are discussed further at the end of this chapter.) In summary, one might describe the Save the Children approach as 'bottom up' and UNICEF's approach as more 'from the top'. Save the Children worked to engage a variety of local and regional political and military authorities and to mobilise local communities to improve child protection. At the time, UNICEF focused on advocating with the RCD-Goma political leadership to make a full commitment to stop recruiting and to demobilise children.

In part, the difference in approach resulted from different views about how to manage the demobilisation of children in the context of ongoing conflict. Save the Children began to build up a programme where small, but gradual demobilisations were possible, while UNICEF felt demobilisation should only take place on a more formal, full scale basis. Today, it is widely agreed that the best interests of the children call for the pursuit of all opportunities to safely demobilise and reintegrate children. This report has noted that UNICEF signed a plan of action with the RCD-Goma in December 2001. The advocacy efforts leading up to that agreement and parallel progress of the Save the Children military training and work with hundreds of demobilised children are now considered to have been effective, complementary approaches.

Types of advocacy activities

With the increasing number of organisations involved in advocacy, there is a broad range of advocacy activities at the political, military, international and local level. Save the Children's advocacy activities include:

- € regular contact with military authorities
- € the military training project (described below)
- € regular meetings with partners and CCPNs to exchange information and reinforce results
- € workshops with local authorities regarding child protection and the DDR process
- € support to some local NGOs in child-to-child approaches

- € working through the Coalition (see section 3.3) and a broad network of local partners has in particular facilitated some progress for demobilisation, including with other armed groups.

The Coalition, described in the co-ordination section below, and other local partners highlight other advocacy activities such as:

- € distributing information on international and national law regarding child soldiers
- € engaging direct contacts with local authorities and community leaders
- € preparing materials and campaigns, such as posters and leaflets
- € undertaking group field missions to meet with specific military authorities in instances of reported recruitment.

The question of monitoring and reporting has received a heightened level of international attention. Save the Children and the Coalition monitor effectively because local partners and community networks have rapid means of communicating instances of recruitment or other issues to Save the Children and other partners. In turn, by establishing a variety of contact points with political and military authorities, Save the Children and partners have been able to redress such cases through the RCD-Goma hierarchy.

In discussions during the evaluation for this paper, community networks and Coalition members described how progress in advocacy has facilitated their ability to approach military officials directly. They do so to discuss child protection concerns generally, but also do so in concert with parents or traditional chiefs to seek the release of specific cases. They report that when they are not successful in such efforts on their own, it is crucial that they are able to call on Save the Children staff or other international organisations to join in their effort.

Role of the international community

Discussions with local organisations for this paper emphasised the important role of international actors in advocacy. Throughout the conflict in DRC, a number of international actors have expressed concerns about child recruitment and ensured that the issue is raised in discussions with the armed groups. In fact, a commitment to not recruit children and to facilitate their demobilisation has been included in almost all of the formal peace agreements signed by the various parties. In addition, the government, RCD-Goma and Mouvement National de Liberation Congolais (MLC) have made commitments to UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict to not recruit children and to facilitate their demobilisation. While an arduous task, all of these agreements and commitments have been very helpful tools for organisations working in the field to achieve their implementation.

Impact of advocacy

In the complex conflict environment of DRC, it is difficult to measure the impact of advocacy on reducing recruitment of children and gaining their demobilisation. The progress of demobilised children as shown quantitatively contributes to demonstrating impact.

Figure 4: Save the Children statistics of child demobilisation by year¹

	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
Goma		52	145	149	346
Bukavu	121	157	263	96	637
Total		209	408	245	983

Discussions during the evaluation for this paper identified the following indicators of impact:

- € local organisations are able to speak freely about child soldiers whereas earlier, they were often harassed by authorities or accused of being spies
- € local observers note that any new recruitment is conducted discretely and in the more rural areas – rather than in larger towns where monitoring features more international organisations – demonstrating that authorities are sensitive to criticism
- € Save the Children and local partners have made tentative progress with other armed groups.

3.2. Engaging armed groups

A key feature of the child soldiers' work in North and South Kivu has been the direct engagement of armed groups. In other words, the work is not only advocating for the release of children, but establishing regular and transparent dialogue with political and military leaders of armed groups.

This has been a careful process as Save the Children strived to maintain its neutrality and independence as an humanitarian organisation. For example, Save the Children has never developed a partnership agreement that would be signed by itself and the RCD-Goma as this might be perceived as a more formal relationship. This is important to note as another armed group drafted an agreement in the process of discussions with Save the Children. All Save the Children activities and engagements have been on a more case-by-case basis, including the child protection training project undertaken with RCD-Goma military officials.

The Save the Children military training programme

A number of factors influenced the decision to try the military child protection training. Due to the multiplicity of armed groups and their dispersed hierarchy, it was clear that decisions at the top political-military level were communicated to the field in a limited manner. In fact there remain instances where local commanders refuse to respect demobilisation documents signed at the highest political-military level. The mobility of military personnel also necessitates an ongoing approach to raising awareness. Further, Save the Children realised it needed a more specific effort to improve the understanding of military personnel regarding Save the Children's and its partner's work and mandate in child protection. A constraint to advocacy work with the military was found to be their suspicion that Save the Children or partners were 'working for their enemies' or 'seeking to destabilise their ranks'. Finally, advocacy on child soldiers progressed with a sense of opportunity from the RCD-Goma's interest in the peace process: they were more open to training efforts and to responding to criticisms of conduct.

Save the Children was highly concerned to expand and improve its contacts with the military in South Kivu in response to a massive recruitment drive by the RCD-Goma during 2000. The idea for the military training project was initiated in a meeting with the commander of the 6th Brigade

in Bukavu in July 2000. The commander acknowledged that one of the reasons various military officials were not following the decree to not recruit and to demobilise children was their lack of awareness of international law such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The first, 'pilot', training workshop finally took place in February 2001 in Bukavu. The objective of this first workshop was to increase the participants' level of understanding of the international law concerning child rights and child soldiers and their understanding of the work of the demobilisation and reintegration programme. The 30 participants in the workshop were Commanders of units and training camps in the periphery of Bukavu. The themes of the workshop were: the concept of the child; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the impact of armed conflict on children; and a presentation on the Save the Children demobilisation and reintegration programme approaches and progress.

The impact of this first workshop included a noticeable increase in the number of children demobilised in the next months. For example, from five children released in January 2001 to 68 in February. Even during the workshop, military officials started bringing more children to the transit centre. Further, the participants in the workshop recommended that the workshops be extended to other units and battalions in other zones.

Following the success of this first workshop, Save the Children sought assistance through the International Save the Children Alliance to develop a more concrete military training project, including reinforcing the training skills of Save the Children team members and partners. The assistance of the International Save the Children Alliance, in particular Save the Children Sweden, was sought due to their experience in military training in West Africa.²

With the help (during May and June 2001) of a consultant experienced in the West Africa military training programme, a series of training modules was developed, a core team of five trainers was prepared from the Save the Children staff and partners, and the first of a series of trainings with military officers was conducted. Following the February 2001 workshop in Bukavu, the first training workshops in this more formal programme were held on 4–7 June in Goma and 11–14 June in Bukavu.

In establishing a schedule with the RCD-Goma to conduct the trainings, it was agreed that each workshop would be limited to 20 participants and the RCD-Goma would select participants according to the following criteria:

- € commanders from field posts
- € commanders with some level of French
- € commanders with diverse military backgrounds³
- € commanders who had benefited from previous training sessions on international humanitarian law, such as by the ICRC.

The military training programme emphasises a balance between presentations and participatory methodologies. As part of the closing session of the workshop, other political, military and community partners are invited to the session.⁴ Key themes of the four-day training sessions include:

- € brief introduction to Save the Children
- € fundamental rights and needs of children – including the concept of childhood, stages of development and key principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- € impact of armed conflict on children – including themes of separation, recruitment and exploitation

- € role of the military in the protection of children, including actions to prevent and reduce the impact of conflict on children, and discussion of codes of conduct
- € an in-depth presentation of the Save the Children child soldier programme – including the transit centre, role of CCPNs and the community reintegration approach.

During 2001, seven training workshops were held and 150 military officers of the RCD-Goma trained. In addition to the increase in child soldiers demobilised, other results include:

- € improvement in collaboration with the office of the RCD-Goma Major General – an important relationship as he signs the demobilisation documents for the children
- € improvement in collaboration with military groups in the field and between local NGO partners and military groups in the field
- € improvements in the engagement of military personnel in the demobilisation and non-recruitment of children.

In North Kivu in particular, the military training workshops are felt to have made a significant contribution to progress in negotiations between the RCD-Goma and UNICEF for a more formal demobilisation commitment and programme. UNICEF undertook a series of meetings with the political leadership of the RCD-Goma from May to December 2001 – culminating in the written agreement of principles to demobilise and reintegrate child soldiers in October 2001 and a formal agreement and plan of action on 4 December 2001.⁵

Future perspectives for the military training component

In terms of lessons learned in working with non-state actors, conducting child protection training for military officers has proven to be an important step in the persuasion, rather than denunciation, approach to advocacy. In interviews with external stakeholders for this paper, the Save the Children military training workshops were consistently cited as one of the most influential factors in progress on child soldiers.

At the time of this evaluation, the military training programme was inactive pending an evaluation and review of the training materials and methodologies. In part, this reflects some of the constraints realised in the first workshops, including the fact that the criteria for participants in the training workshops was not respected. While it was hoped that military commanders in field-based posts would be the main participants, most of the participants selected by the RCD-Goma were the staff of more political chapters. Difficulties were also found in the level of French for many participants. The Save the Children team hopes to adapt the sessions and materials into Kiswahili and other languages in the future.

On the other hand, representatives of the police were selected for some training sessions and their participation was found to be unexpectedly positive. Some of the police participants were women or had experience in juvenile justice issues and their contributions to the group work and discussions were found by the other participants to be especially helpful and insightful. In an environment where roles between military and police are often unclear, it was realised that including police representation in future trainings would be particularly beneficial.

The original plan for the military training work, as of June 2001, anticipated that the programme would explore a shift to a training-of-trainers approach. In other words, it anticipated that a group of RCD-Goma military officers would be trained to conduct and extend the trainings themselves and perhaps to incorporate the child protection training into other, internal training plans. In fact, in interviews for this paper, a number of military officials requested that the training-of-trainers element proceed.

However, the evaluation for this paper found that the training-of-trainers approach was inappropriate at this time. A key principle for Save the Children as a humanitarian, child rights organisation is to maintain their independence and neutrality. Such an expansion of the military training work might be perceived by other armed groups as an investment in the structure of the RCD-Goma. Indeed Save the Children and local partners were beginning to make some progress in negotiations with other armed groups, so it is important that their transparency and independence is clear. Other concerns include the reliability of RCD-Goma military trainers being willing and able to conduct ongoing training.

On the other hand, the military training workshops have proven effective in improving action on child soldiers by individual commanders and chapters of the RCD-Goma. Thus it is recommended that the military training component be continued, but that such training should continue when appropriate on a case-by-case basis, led by Save the Children and partners directly. Perhaps in the longer-term peace process, a training-of-trainers approach can be explored, but the current political-military environment remains a constraint.

3.3. Co-ordination and collaboration

All organisations and stakeholders consulted during the fieldwork for this paper reported co-ordination to be a shortfall in the current work with child soldiers in North and South Kivu. Co-ordination was relatively easy when the child soldiers work began in 1999 between Save the Children, specific military and political authorities, and specific partners such as DIVAS, ICRC, and experienced local organisations. However, as the work has expanded, both quantitatively and geographically, the number of actors has increased and co-ordination has become problematic.

In fact, it is necessary and vital that the number of actors has increased, since the process of preventing recruitment or re-recruitment and supporting the reintegration of child soldiers requires a wide variety of actors and a broad approach. The evaluation for this paper recommended that priority be given to adopting a common programme framework of principles, approaches and standards for all actors, and operational co-ordination mechanisms at the working level.

It should be noted that a number of committees, forums or mechanisms aiming to achieve some aspect of co-ordination exist. Current structures and mechanisms include:

1. The long-established co-ordination between Save the Children and the ICRC for separated children should be highlighted as working especially well. In summary, there is a geographically organised division of work in North and South Kivu between the ICRC and a network of local partners which work with Save the Children on separated children's issues. This has been the case since 1997.
2. Local NGOs also have a number of other networks or 'platforms' that meet regularly. Examples include the Network for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances and the Network for Rural Development. A number of members of these networks and the Coalition are active partners with Save the Children's broader child protection programme, especially regarding work with separated children.
3. The Interdepartmental DDR Commission of the RCD-Goma was created following UNICEF advocacy in 2000. The Commission has a plan of action with UNICEF, but is limited operationally, and the goal of establishing Provincial Commissions has

proceeded very slowly.⁶ Provincial level branches of the Commission that have been established report that they are waiting for more specific instructions from higher RCD-Goma authorities. Such a body may be useful for policy level discussions but is not appropriate to the working level co-ordination issues. In addition, operational child protection organisations need forums for discussion and mechanisms for co-ordination regarding multiple armed groups.

4. Provincial ‘child protection commissions’ aim to meet twice a month. These include most operational actors – international, governmental and local civil society organisations – and focus on the humanitarian sphere. Many look to UNICEF to lead these commissions but it has not had the resources to fulfil this role in the past few years. Despite various efforts to reinvigorate these mechanisms, they have historically met very inconsistently. Further, they likely address too broad a range of child protection issues to be an effective, working level mechanism for child soldier demobilisation and reintegration.
5. Somewhat related to these, are the Provincial Child Protection Councils led by DIVAS and DIVIFAM. These include state services – such as education, health, social affairs and the police – and local NGOs. International organisations, such as UNICEF and Save the Children, participate as observers. A number of stakeholders complain that the Councils function insufficiently, but they have been useful for some policy discussions and Save the Children plans to support efforts to reinvigorate them.
6. In South Kivu, Save the Children and local, operational partners working specifically on child soldiers meet monthly as a ‘task force’.⁷ The ‘task force’ discusses current issues with demobilised children in the transit centres, community level reintegration issues and advocacy activities with specific military units or authorities. While this has covered the great majority of the work on child soldiers, the mechanism would need to be broadened and clarified if it were to serve as an overall co-ordination mechanism in the future. In North Kivu, Save the Children meets monthly with the partners in their child protection programme.⁸ Discussions include issues regarding child soldiers as well as other child protection themes. As the child soldier work grew in 2002, the group identified the need to have more focused, thematic discussions and intends to convene a ‘task force’ similar to that of South Kivu.
7. For a time, the organisations involved in the three Goma transit centres met weekly, but these meetings seem to have been suspended with the conclusion of the Mushaki caseload.⁹
8. Formed in 2000 with active support from Save the Children, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers¹⁰ is a forum of, to date, 87 local organisations in North and South Kivu focused on advocacy and awareness raising. The Coalition aims to meet monthly and has selected two members to act as a secretariat. Membership represents a broad geographic coverage with each organisation contributing to local, community level awareness raising and negotiations with local military authorities. More recently, the North and South Kivu Coalitions have organised as reference groups for two new zones aiming to reach all the Eastern Provinces of DRC.

Discussions for this paper found a number of reasons for the weaknesses in co-ordination. In part, obstacles to co-ordination or collaboration relate to issues of competition and opportunism between local organisations. Another obstacle is the pattern of working with partners only as

defined by funding relationships. Part of the problem is insufficient pro-active communication – meaning there is a sense that organisations wait for others to convene a co-ordination structure or wait for others to initiate discussion and information sharing rather than initiating it themselves. Analysis for this paper also noted a significant need to clarify and increase understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations between organisations.

One key to improving co-ordination and collaboration in the future is to clarify working level mechanisms from more policy or advocacy related forum. For example, the current process of operationalising the Interdepartmental DDR Commissions of the RCD-Goma is useful for policy processes but inappropriate for more working level co-ordination needs. In another example, the local Coalitions to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers bring together a broad range of local organisations that have a role in advocating for the non-recruitment and demobilisation of child soldiers. This is welcome and important for advocacy but a small minority of Coalition members are operational in child soldier activities. A priority for working level co-ordination concerns Provincial level mechanisms for co-ordination on family tracing and processing of demobilisation orders.

Another key to improving the situation in the future will be more concerted leadership between the international child protection organisations. While further discussion is needed by the various actors operational in the field, the inter-agency presentations given as part of the conclusion to the fieldwork for this paper, recommended that Provincial level mechanisms emphasise representation from DIVAS (in regards to appropriate, durable and responsible government structures) and key representatives of the most active international organisations (notably UNICEF, MONUC and international NGOs such as Save the Children).¹¹

Notes

¹ Since 2002 other organisations have become more involved in the programme and so are in a position to add to these statistics from Save the Children.

² The West Africa training programme experience and manual has been published as: *Child rights and child protection of children before, during and after conflict: Training manual for military personnel*, Save the Children Sweden, West Africa Regional Office, 2000. The Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC) training modules were also used; ARC is a collaborative project of the International Save the Children Alliance, UNHCR, UNICEF and others. Individual ARC modules can be downloaded from www.unhcr.ch.

³ Diversity aimed to include RCD officers who were previously affiliated with the former Forces Armées Zaïroises (FAZ) or AFDL.

⁴ Participants in the closing sessions include DIVAS, ICRC, UNICEF, MONUC and local organisations.

⁵ RDC-Goma (2001) 'Principes de base concernant la démobilisation et la réinsertion des 2600 enfants soldats du Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie'.

⁶ In part, the establishment of the Provincial Commissions has proceeded slowly due to the evolution of the conflict. The extent of territory controlled by the RCD-Goma has diminished in the last year or so but the plans to establish the Provincial Commissions focus on cities that remain under their control.

⁷ For those more involved in work in North and South Kivu, organisations participating in the 'task force' meetings in South Kivu include Save the Children, BVES, (Fodation Solidarite des Hommes) FSH, Groupe de recherches et d'actions contre la marginalisation au Kivu (GRAM-Kivu), Initiatives pour le Paysan de Bunyakirr (IPPBu), Messagers pour la Sensibilisation des Enfants a la Paix (MESEP), Programme General pour le Developpement (PGD), and SACD.

⁸ In North Kivu, the monthly Save the Children partner meetings include: Save the Children, DIVAS, the Provincial Council, Human Dignity in the World (HDW), CADRE (Comite dAppui au Developpement Rural Endogene) Minova, Union Paysanne pour un Developpement Rural Integre (UPADARI), PAMI, CAJED, Scouts, APROFIME, and Arche pour Enfants en Detresse (ARED).

⁹ This special demobilisation was described in Chapter 1.

¹⁰ The Coalition is a local organisation formed in the model of, and affiliated with, the international NGO by the same name based in London. Information on the international NGO, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, can be found at www.child-soldiers.org.

¹¹ A welcome development for programme expansion and collaboration will be the special projects for child soldiers in Eastern DRC to be funded by the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) managed by the World Bank. The MDRP has been developed to support peace and security issues for the inter-linked conflicts of the Greater Great Lakes region and is funded and overseen by the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF). Save the Children will continue to concentrate its work in North and South Kivu while a collaboration between CARE, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH) will develop programmes in Province Orientale, Maniema and Northern Katanga.

Chapter 4

The transition: transit centres, family tracing and alternative models

The transition phase is used in this paper to refer to the period of time between the release of the child from the armed group (demobilisation) and reintegration activities at the level of the family and community. Globally, lessons learned emphasise that the transition phase should be seen as the first step in reintegration. While agreement on approaches to and standards for transit centres is important to future work with child soldiers, the evaluation for this paper highlighted that relatively few organisations should be involved in operating transit centres and greater emphasis is needed on the family and community level of work. Indeed global best practice stresses that transit centres do not become permanent care institutions and that interim care should always be planned and implemented in conjunction with a community-based programme that facilitates the return of former child soldiers to their communities.

In the parlance of child soldiers work in DRC to date, the period of time that a released child spends in a transit centre is often described as a separate phase. The transition phase is also presented as a separate chapter in this paper due to ongoing debate and discussion on harmonised standards and approaches to transit centres in DRC. While the majority of transition work concerns transit centres, other key activities addressed in this chapter include family tracing, community assessment and preparation, demobilisation documentation and developing alternatives to transit centres.

4.1. Transit centres

As advocacy and programme activities gained influence during 2000 and 2001, more and more children were demobilised. Following progress with the RCD-Goma leadership to begin a more formal demobilisation effort, in April 2002 a special demobilisation of 104 children was arranged from Mushaki, a military training camp near Goma. In preparation for the Mushaki demobilisation, Save the Children supported DIVAS North Kivu to open a transit centre – replicating the model of the DIVAS centre in Bukavu – and UNICEF gave short-term support to two local NGOs to open centres in Goma.

Figure 5: Chronology of transit centres

1999	Save the Children-DIVAS Bukavu centre opens
2000	Bukavu transit centre continues and Save the Children works through existing centres in Goma for child soldier cases – CAJED and Don Bosco
2001	Above model continues
2002	<i>April:</i> New centres open in Goma upon occasion of 'official' Mushaki demobilisation: Save the Children-DIVAS in Goma, plus UNICEF provide three months' support to the local NGO SOS Grands Lacs to open a centre and for cases referred to Don Bosco. <i>September:</i> UNICEF provides three months' support to the local NGO BVES to open an additional centre in Bukavu.

Unfortunately, some of the new transit centres in 2002 adopted different standards and approaches and a number of collaboration issues were encountered. While this working paper

primarily reviews and documents the work of Save the Children, the different approaches and activities during 2002 highlight key debates and lessons learned. Thus this chapter also seeks to include the experience of other actors to give as full a picture as possible of the work with child soldiers in North and South Kivu. A number of key themes and issues have emerged as either recommended standards for the future or areas requiring further discussion in the current effort to harmonise approaches and identify minimum standards.

How much time should children spend in transit centres

The Save the Children-DIVAS centre in Bukavu emphasises the objective of family and community reintegration, so the length of stay for a child in the centre is flexible to his individual case. Many children have been able to maintain some form of contact with their families so that family tracing has been fairly straightforward.¹ Outside of some exceptional cases, Save the Children has found that eight to ten weeks was often necessary to ensure that the family and community were prepared to receive the child. This preparation includes mediating any issues where community members may be suspicious of the child's military activities.

Throughout this early experience, other organisations, both international and local, criticised the programme and proposed that transit centres should have a three-month minimum stay. They proposed that demobilised child soldiers would need this period for psychosocial rehabilitation.

To the contrary, the Save the Children-DIVAS centres have consistently found that family and community reunification were the main preoccupations of the children and that the re-establishment of those relationships was the most important step in supporting the psychosocial wellbeing of the children. In focus groups with children for this evaluation, family reunification was also consistently the priority concern of the children. In fact, many expressed frustration when security issues or tracing delayed their reunification. Staff in a number of transit centres noted that children often resist getting involved in some of the education or more vocationally oriented activities because they want to leave the centre as soon as possible and return to their families. As further demonstration that most children prefer as short a stay as possible in the centres, some self-demobilised children in transit centres animatedly reported that they were only waiting for their demobilisation orders and would otherwise go home.

It has now been largely agreed that the period of stay in transit centres will depend on the individual case. However, it should be noted that some actors continue to take the position that a three-month minimum stay is necessary. Notably, it remains the position of some political and military authorities that three months is insufficient. This question should be anticipated in discussions as child soldier demobilisation and reintegration work expands geographically and with different armed groups.

Analysis for this paper found that this position arises from differing objectives for transit centres. Where a three-month minimum or longer stay is proposed, one finds the expectation that the transit centre should include vocational training. To the contrary, drawing from participatory research and focus groups, the position of families and communities is that the former child soldiers' socio-economic support should be based in the community and oriented to family livelihood. In conclusion, leading programme partners in DRC are clear that the transit centres are inappropriate for vocational training and that socio-economic reintegration should be addressed at, and tailored to, the level of the community. (This question is discussed further in Chapter 5.)

Two issues are important to note as caveats. The first issue concerns the question of particular psychosocial support needs.² Save the Children and local partners have found that such cases are best supported in the context of their family and community where consistent relationships can slowly be built.

Second, there have been a number of cases requiring more than three months in the transit centres and some cases where children have returned to the transit centres for security reasons. The majority require less than three months stay, but it is also now agreed that the duration of stay in transit centres should not be limited to three months. It should be noted that the centres that opened with three months' financing have provided unclear indications of their ongoing resources and have reported times when staff worked voluntarily. Discussions for this evaluation highlighted the need to develop alternatives to transit centres so that the 'transitory' objective of the centres can be better maintained. (This is discussed further in section 4.3.)

Who should run transit centres?

Identifying an appropriate partner to manage a transit centre requires local analysis. A variety of models may emerge in different locations in DRC. The choice of DIVAS by Save the Children provides a number of advantages. Firstly, DIVAS is the civil authority responsible for care, protection and decisions for such children. Contributing to their capacity to care for demobilised children and participate in their reintegration provides a long-term investment in such capacity and responsibility in DRC.

In reality, some of the local NGOs have gained more direct experience in child protection work in recent years; in part due to the role of international humanitarian organisations as sources of funding. However, there is a challenging environment of competition between local NGOs such that selecting DIVAS for a transit centre represents a more neutral choice.³ On the other hand, the DIVAS centres may not meet all the capacity needs and they are not likely to be an option in areas outside of Provincial capitals such as Bukavu and Goma.

Questions of capacity and collaboration between centres

While choices between DIVAS and local NGOs are a factor, local analysis is required to identify the best way to meet needs for interim care of demobilised children. The Save the Children-DIVAS Bukavu centre has not yet faced a situation where it had to care for a large number of children; the average number of children has consistently been under 50. The centre has the capacity to accommodate up to 300 children as the building has a large annex and reserve supplies are in place.

The question of capacity was undertaken more specifically in Goma in preparation for the April 2002 Mushaki demobilisation. Indeed some estimates of the number of child soldiers at the Mushaki training camp were as high as 500. UNICEF supported DIVAS to undertake a review of the quality and capacity of existing centres in the Goma area. The results indicated that while quality was sufficient at CAJED and Don Bosco, and only at these centres, capacity was clearly insufficient. In discussions to prepare for this special demobilisation, Save the Children agreed to support DIVAS to open a centre on the model of their Bukavu experience. Following initial orientations and funding limits, UNICEF agreed to provide three months' support to Don Bosco to receive some cases and three months' support to the local NGO SOS Grands Lacs to open an additional centre.

In other demobilisation experiences, the environment of large centres for children has been found to be inappropriate to their social reintegration and wellbeing.⁴ Thus, the idea of preparing a number of smaller centres was adopted. However, the various centres in Goma encountered numerous collaboration problems.

One lesson of the Goma experience concerned the criteria for directing children to certain centres. It was first proposed to group the children by area of origin to facilitate family tracing and community connections. (In fact six children from Mushaki were sent to the Bukavu centre for this reason.) For unclear reasons, it was decided to divide the children by age. A group of children between ten and thirteen years were sent to the Don Bosco centre and the older children were divided between the Save the Children-DIVAS and SOS Grands Lacs centres. Unfortunately, some siblings were separated due to this decision.

Since the Mushaki experience, multiple centres have continued. In part, the motivation for opening more centres was the expectation that the RCD-Goma would begin demobilising as many as 2,600 children. However, a lack of clarity has emerged regarding how demobilised children are oriented between the different centres. The choice of centre is determined more by funding relationships than by objective criteria, such as capacity assessments, or a co-ordination mechanism.

Upon reflection, a mix of advantages and disadvantages are found regarding capacity and criteria:

- € The division of children by age was reported by some to facilitate the work of the caregivers in terms of non-formal education and developmental levels. However, this can also be accomplished within centres accommodating various age groups. Further, centres should aim to support socialisation as children will experience it back in their communities.
- € The division of children by age was found in some cases to facilitate rapport between children, where older children might otherwise have intimidated younger children.
- € Siblings should not be separated.
- € While it is advantageous to limit the overall number of children in a centre at any given time, tracing co-ordination and case management was found to be facilitated where there was a single centre. This underscores the need to pro-actively ensure co-ordination where the need for more than one centre arises.
- € A provincial and working level co-ordination mechanism is needed between the military and child protection actors. This co-ordination mechanism would be the focal point for any military authorities ready to release a child and would ideally be the focal point to facilitate linkages to the family tracing system and processing of demobilisation documents.
- € A danger in creating new centres is that interest arises in their longevity after the programme. Globally, best practice in demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers, and separated children generally, emphasises the need to avoid institutional approaches and to discourage the expansion of centre-based care for children. For example, a careful assessment would be necessary before supporting centres like CAJED and Don Bosco to expand their capacity for child soldiers without analysing how that expansion might be temporary or used in the future. The approach of renting structures for transit centres may best meet capacity needs and yet ensure their temporary nature.

In conclusion, the priority issues are to ensure an assessment of the most appropriate way to meet capacity needs through existing or new centres in a given location and to ensure full co-ordination between partners and collaboration with the family tracing system. (Family tracing issues are discussed further below.)

Entry criteria: should centres include child soldiers and other children?

The question of criteria for centres raises the question of accommodating different ‘categories’ of children in the same centre. Throughout the first years of the programme, Save the Children integrated the interim care of demobilised children and other ‘categories’ of children. The Bukavu centre occasionally cared for cases of separated children and demobilised children in North Kivu were accommodated in existing centres in Goma. Both the CAJED and Don Bosco centres in Goma were originally established to work with street children and children in conflict with the law and, as such, had varying degrees of existing capacity for interim care.

A number of outside actors proposed that child soldiers needed special centres and that it would be dangerous to mix them with street children, separated children, or other children in temporary care situations. A number of worries have also been expressed about mixing child soldiers of different ethnic or military backgrounds.

Further, the possibility of having girls in the same centre as boy child soldiers has not yet been fully prepared. The Bukavu centre has accommodated a few girl child soldiers and separated children without incident, but larger scale experience in working with girls has not yet been realised. In the few cases in Bukavu, arrangements for separate accommodation in the centre are made while most education and social activities are mixed-gender. This arrangement may be feasible for the future but further analysis is needed.

In conclusion, programme partners have come to largely agree that mixing different categories of children is actually beneficial to their social reintegration. Where centres have experience in working with mixed categories of children, they report some initial difficulties in that some child soldiers feel marginalised and some are aggressive. However, they find that after encouraging participation in various educational and social activities, the tensions quickly subside and the children express profound appreciation for learning about the true situation of other children. Overall, all observers note a strong solidarity between the children. Centre staff underscored that the main tasks are training of staff, that they explain the arrival of child soldiers to the other children and that they ensure pro-active dialogue and counselling with the child soldiers in the first few days. Further, codes of conduct have been found helpful in the centres.⁵

Staffing and training

Staff selection and training for transit centres are essential to the success of receiving former child soldiers and supporting their reintegration. In the first Save the Children-DIVAS centre in Bukavu, it was decided that DIVAS and Save the Children would each provide part of the staff. The first team was composed of:

- € two educators, three care providers and two guards from DIVAS
- € one manager, two reintegration assistants and one nurse from Save the Children.

Save the Children provided training for all of the staff and was responsible for the overall quality of transit centre work. The staffing partnership took advantage of Save the Children’s experience with transit centres and difficult casework and ensured the capacity building and authority of appropriate civil authorities.

Over the last year, the Save the Children-supported DIVAS transit centres in Bukavu and Goma have changed so that DIVAS provides the staff and daily management. Each centre has a regular

staff of ten to twelve, with approximately thirty per cent women – four of twelve staff in Goma are women and three of ten staff in Bukavu are women. Staff composition includes:

- € one director or transit centre manager
- € six care-givers and/or educators working in shifts. In effect, all staff serve as caregivers and counsellors and lead all social, cultural and educational activities of the centre; some specialise in conducting the literacy and catch-up education classes. The staff work in rotations organised by the schedule of activities of the centre. For example, in the Bukavu centre the shifts are from 7am to 1pm, 1pm to 6pm and then 6pm to 7am.
- € one nurse
- € two to three guards.

One might note the absence of support staff in this arrangement for tasks such as cleaning and cooking. The section below on physical conditions describes how the caregivers and children are organised into ‘artificial family’ groupings and participate in such tasks as part of the transit centre mimicking daily, civilian life. The section on physical conditions also describes how health needs are addressed.

Staff-to-child ratios and stand-by capacity

The staffing arrangement is organised to maintain a ratio of 1:10 between caregivers and former child soldiers. Save the Children’s support to DIVAS includes preparations for additional caregivers in order to maintain this ratio in the event that a larger number of children need to stay at the transit centre.

It was not possible to get full staffing information for the other centres to provide a comparison in this paper. Of interest, however, is the fact that the transit centre run by the local NGO BVES in Bukavu reports having more than 20 staff. The BVES centre in Bukavu also reports using a ratio of between 1:6 and 1:10 as a standard. The Don Bosco centre in Goma reports having six key management staff directing the centre, dormitory, classes and administration plus thirty-two caregivers. However, this staff is permanent for a centre working regularly with some 300 street children, separated or abandoned children and many other categories of vulnerable children. Don Bosco does not hire additional staff for situations where they also take former child soldiers.

Across all centres whose funding and capacity are consistent and staff relatively permanent, salaries range from \$50 to \$150 per month depending on duties and experience. These salaries seem appropriate relative to the more stable and professional salaries of NGO or DIVAS staff.

The question of staff on stand-by raises the question of other staffing-related opportunities. The range of functions for staff may be too diverse – counselling, conducting literacy and catch-up education classes, and conducting cultural and other activities. The priority for regular caregivers should be their capacity to develop rapport with adolescents. Other arrangements might be the best choice for conducting some of the educational activities. Some transit centres have been able to develop partnerships with local organisations to provide activities without hiring special staff themselves. For example, the DIVAS Bukavu has arranged for a local NGO specialised in HIV awareness to conduct some non-formal education activities in the centre. Such opportunities need to be further explored and expanded in North and South Kivu.

In conclusion, some flexibility of staffing configurations between transit centres is acceptable. Certainly cost efficiencies and expanded community relationships can be achieved by seeking partnerships with local organisations that can conduct certain activities at the transit centre. A minimum requirement is maintaining an effective ratio of caregivers to children at all times.

Thus transit centres also require some form of stand-by capacity where additional staff can be employed on a flexible basis in the event of larger numbers of children residing at the transit centre.

Identifying appropriate staff and training

Identifying appropriate staff leads to questions regarding a local organisation's human resources or recruitment of new staff. As noted above, a particular risk in recruiting and hiring new staff is that their need for the job may interfere with their commitment to fully support the reintegration of child soldiers. Lessons learned globally emphasise involving transit centre staff in the reintegration process and offering prospects of other roles and jobs as part of the programme. This underscores the approach of working through existing social service authorities and local organisations, as the sustainability of their activities is most likely in the future.

Above all, the qualities and competencies of prospective staff should be emphasised. It should be clear to prospective staff that working with child soldiers can be extremely difficult. Staff capacity to provide counselling and establish rapport with older children is a priority qualification.

A number of trainings by UNICEF and Save the Children have contributed to the capacity of the staff of transit centres and local partners working at the community level. Since 1997, Save the Children has regularly provided training and follow-up workshops to a network of local partners. These trainings have focused on child rights and, more specifically, the methodologies and techniques of family tracing.⁶ During 2001 and 2002, UNICEF supported a series of training workshops for local child protection partners, including DIVAS. These focused on social work skills with children in difficult circumstances. UNICEF also supported a training workshop on the DDR process that included representatives of RDC-Goma.

In discussions for this paper, all stakeholders reported that specific training for all transit centre staff was a priority. Save the Children conducted special training for the DIVAS staff for both the Bukavu and Goma transit centres. Training included the following themes:

- € international legal instruments in child protection, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter for the Rights and Well-being of the Child
- € the DDR process
- € situation of child soldiers
- € communicating with children and conflict mediation
- € techniques in documenting children
- € techniques in family mediation
- € preparation for community reintegration
- € management of supplies
- € planning and managing activities.

It is recommended that training themes be expanded to include adolescent development as it is important for programme actors to have a better understanding of this; particularly the role of identity and belonging during this stage of development, and how this affects the balance between their sense of independence and desire for family and community reintegration.

Transit centre staff stress that training in conflict mediation and communicating with children were the most important and useful. They consistently report that the demobilised children can be difficult, apprehensive or aggressive in the first few days to two weeks, but that through

intensive dialogue and conflict mediation efforts they are able to establish rapport and engage them positively in the reintegration process.

Physical structure, conditions and basic needs

The physical structure of the transit centres ranges from rented buildings and houses to tent facilities within some form of enclosure. The Don Bosco centre has some fairly large dormitories and open facilities for various social, recreational and educational activities.⁷ All feature arrangements where the children form small groups for sleeping quarters and participate in the cleaning, cooking and other tasks in the centre. Indeed, there is broad agreement that the children's participation in the daily tasks of the centre facilitates a return to the structure and roles of civilian life.

Regarding conditions, all centres have a supply of basic clothing and provide three meals a day. One of the more contentious questions has concerned bedding. Some transit centres have cots and mattresses while others have more traditional mats and blankets. Lessons learned from the first transit centre experience in 1999, as well as in other programmes globally, emphasise that the transit centre should provide conditions similar to the daily realities of the children's families and communities. This helps to facilitate the transition to the reality of civilian life and to avoid creating resentment with the host community. Further, towards integration, it helps to diminish discrimination between former child soldiers and other vulnerable children.

Thus in conclusion, traditional mats and blankets are the most appropriate choice and some questions might be raised regarding the meals. While many demobilised children have nutritional deficiencies to address, it should be borne in mind that most of their families and communities do not regularly have three daily meals.

All centres provide basic primary health, including having a nurse on staff, and have arrangements with local clinics or hospitals to address more serious health needs. However, whether children should systematically have an HIV/AIDS test has been debated. After some debate, it is clear that there is not the capacity to provide voluntary and confidential testing and counselling on HIV/AIDS. Further, the context of demobilisation is not conducive to addressing the anxieties and follow-up with either the child or his family.

Moise's story

"In January 2001, while I was staying with my older brother, the Local-Defense militia came and took all of the men, adults and youth, to Mushaki. I was 15 years old and my parents did not know I was taken.

At Mushaki, we were submitted to unbearable agonies. When children were unable to keep up, they were whipped. This is why I am deformed and condemned to be handicapped the rest of my life.

Finally in May 2002, a commander took pity on me and took me to the DIVAS transit center in Goma. Save the Children and the staff took me to the hospital and organised follow-up treatment at a centre for persons with handicaps. Some members of my family have been found, an uncle and cousins, but I am continuing my health care here for now."

Should centres be open or closed?

Some centres have policies where the children are free to take walks and visit various contacts outside the centre during the day, while other centres prohibit children from moving outside the

centre. We have already noted above that some centres are open to other categories of children or arrange for some activities to be integrated with the community. Throughout the experience of the various transit centres in North and South Kivu, allowing at least some level of openness to the children and community has been found beneficial.

Security: physical security and child protection mechanisms

Regarding physical security, it should be emphasised that all of the transit centres in North and South Kivu are in the capital cities and overall security has remained relatively intact in the context of the conflict. (In one case, some children were transferred to Goma during a period when active conflict threatened Bukavu.) It should be acknowledged that as Save the Children has begun to investigate possibilities for various forms of transit care in other locations, as part of expanding the work geographically, security issues related to the ongoing conflict are a primary concern.

Save the Children and the other organisations have protected the civilian nature of the centres, refusing to allow military guards or other involvement. Further, the emphasis on transparency between child protection organisations and the military has facilitated a level of protection of the transit centres.

The security concerns for children outside the transit centre have included a few cases of harassment by members of the military or police. The demobilisation documents, described below, and contacts with the political and military hierarchy have proven to be a vital resource in redressing such incidents.

Family tracing system and collaboration

As noted earlier in the paper, the programme has found that family tracing and assessing the community situation are priorities during the transit centre phase. Nationally, family tracing is led by the ICRC, national Red Cross volunteers and, in North and South Kivu, Save the Children and their extensive network of local partners. While often constrained by security and access issues, this system has functioned effectively for more than five years. One complication was the ICRC's former policy to only conduct special tracing or transfers for children aged 15 years or younger. For children 16 years or older, Save the Children often relied on MONUC or other international partners to help with logistical needs. MONUC continues to contribute to occasional transport needs, but ICRC changed their policy to include all children under 18 years.

Regarding the work of different transit centres with the expansion in 2002, the new organisations wanted to conduct tracing for the children in their own centre. Unfortunately, an effort to set up a geographically divided system was not accepted. In fact, tracing work experienced some significant delays and unhelpful obstruction. This was accentuated by the direction of some centres that the children would remain for a fixed three-month period. Some children in these centres began to ask for help with family reunification when they learned that other children had already been reunited.

While there is value in training more partners in the techniques and methodologies of family tracing, the greater need is to expand the network of partners based in particular geographical areas. Upon reflection, all programme partners agree it is imperative to work with the co-ordinated tracing system.

In the future, it will be important to establish a mechanism where focal points from ICRC and Save the Children, for example, work with each centre on tracing. This is important not only for co-ordination but because the quality of the information gained through the rapport between the caregivers and children is critical to the effectiveness of tracing.

Case management and reporting

In addition to family tracing information, the DIVAS transit centres maintain a confidential file on each child. A basic documentation form includes identity and family tracing information, including the preferences of the child for family reunification in cases where parents have separated or an extended family member might be preferred (see annexes). The form is continuously updated by the caregivers concerning education or livelihood activities to be anticipated for the child upon his return to family and community. As caregivers establish trust with the children over time, they also maintain confidential information on the children's recruitment and demobilisation experience.

In the case of the DIVAS transit centres, Save the Children works to integrate the data from these forms into a database to facilitate overall monitoring and reporting on the programme. This allows for integration of the data with follow-up information. Unfortunately, due to the constraints in collaboration, data from the other transit centres has not been integrated to give a more comprehensive view of the child soldiers work in North and South Kivu. It should also be noted that the Save the Children database has been maintained in basic Excel spreadsheet format and requires updating and improvements.

Types of activities

As well as activities to meet basic needs, such as health, clothing and food, the centres have adopted a range of social, cultural, educational and psychosocial activities. There is wide agreement that social, cultural or 'life skills' activities are a priority for the centres. In discussions for this evaluation, staff highlighted the need for training and activities on the themes of conflict management, peace education, co-habitation and respect for human rights. Similarly, sports, cultural and leisure activities, including walks and visits to local places of interest, and opportunities to attend religious services were noted by both staff and children as important. The theme of self-respect was noted in regards to the need for training and activities on sexual health and relations (including awareness of HIV/AIDS), and discouraging the use of drugs. In such activities, some centres have been able to draw on useful partnerships with other local organisations rather than provide all activities themselves.

Educational activities prioritise literacy and require an informal schedule mixed with social and cultural activities. The great majority of former child soldiers are either illiterate or have very low education levels. Classes include reading, writing and basic numeracy and have been able to draw on fairly well established pedagogy and materials. Unfortunately, didactic material for literacy or non-formal education in the centres has been inconsistently provided, but the centres have been able to photocopy various resources.

In addition to literacy, most centres also provide catch-up classes for those children who may be able to be reintegrated into the formal education system. Further, most centres have been able to draw on local, well-trained teachers to help meet the centres needs in providing education activities.

The question of more economically oriented activities remains a point of debate. In part this reflects the debate with some actors who believe the centres should include vocational training. The DIVAS and SOS Grands Lacs centres in Goma have experimented with small-scale agricultural and livestock activities. The Don Bosco centre in Goma has incorporated some child soldiers into their carpentry or sewing classes.

A risk in providing economically oriented activities is that children may prefer to stay at the centre rather than returning to their community. Indeed, there are some cases of this at the Don Bosco centre. In a few cases, tensions have arisen between children residing in different centres and their caregivers when they sense that they do not have benefits or opportunities equal to those of children in other centres. In addition, given the pronounced level of poverty throughout DRC, there is a high risk of resentment from the community if child soldiers receive special opportunities.

While some actors insist that vocational training activities should be part of the transit centres, there is broad agreement between the main programme partners that vocational and economic activities should be part of, and tailored to, the community reintegration level of work. (The analysis behind the community reintegration approach is discussed further in section 5.3.) However, some small-scale agricultural and livestock activities may be appropriate in that they may contribute to both the child's reintegration and to the centres' recurrent costs. For example, growing vegetables or caring for rabbits contributes to the centres' food resources. Indeed a majority of the children are reintegrating into rural communities. This requires further discussion between programme partners in the current effort to harmonise approaches and establish standards.

The question of reintegration kits

The diversity between centres in economic or vocational activities relates to the question of 'reintegration kits'. 'Reintegration kits' have inconsistently, both over time and between centres, been provided to the children. Save the Children, through its support to the DIVAS centres, has consistently sought to provide a basic kit of clothing, shoes, blankets and soap. The value of the kit is between \$30 and \$35. In a few cases, Don Bosco provided some materials related to the carpentry or sewing class in which the child participated. In discussions for this evaluation, inconsistent and contradictory information was received as to the contents, financing and criteria for 'reintegration kits' of other centres.⁸

In conclusion, most programme partners agree that reintegration assistance, material or otherwise, should be tailored to the individual child and the context of his community. However, a number of local authorities and partners continue to request that a standardised, minimum kit should be adopted. In other words, some local partners believe that materials, such as school supplies, agricultural implements or livestock, should be provided as a 'kit' to each child. Others, including the results of focus groups with families and communities for this paper, believe that all support should be oriented through community projects that focus on family livelihoods and should include various categories of vulnerable children.

Figure 6: Summary of key points on transit centres

- € The objective of transit centres should be to facilitate the child's return to family and community. Socio-economic activities, including vocational training, should be oriented to the community level rather than a featured activity of the transit centres.
- € No minimum stay – demobilised children should not be required to stay in transit centres for a specific period of time. Rather, the length of stay should depend on family tracing and community assessment. Resources need to be invested in developing alternatives for cases who cannot be family reunified in the short-term.
- € Local analysis in choosing partners for transit centres should include local authorities, in particular DIVAS, and local NGOs. Where new facilities are arranged, their temporary nature should be clear. Key questions to analyse include:
 - € Is it possible to work with a number of local organisations for small capacity centres or is a larger capacity centre needed?
 - € How can the work of the transit centres be integrated with reintegration and longer-term work with all categories of vulnerable children?
- € Staff selection for transit centres should emphasise experience and capacity in working with older children. Specific training should be provided before a centre opens.
- € Staffing arrangements should aim for a 1:10 ratio between staff and children and should strive to build a consistent relationship between staff members and children.
- € Stand-by staff and partnerships with local organisations to provide certain activities should also be prepared as part of staff arrangements and training.
- € Physically, transit centres should provide conditions (bedding and meals for example) that are similar to those in the children's home communities.
- € Preparation of the centres should include discussions with the community about the work of the centre and how activities and interaction between the centre and community contributes to the social reintegration of the children.
- € Transit centres should provide primary health capacity and make arrangements with local clinics or hospitals for other health care needs.
- € In addition to basic needs, the transit centres should emphasise social, cultural, recreational and educational activities. Themes should emphasise conflict management, peace education, and life skills. Literacy and catch-up education activities will need to be adapted to an informal schedule and the levels of the children.
- € Clear, working level co-ordination mechanisms are needed at the Provincial level between operational actors. Collaboration is especially vital between various actors and the ICRC and Save the Children family tracing network. Expansions to family tracing networks should be based on the geographic role of community organisations. Nationally, other expansions may be necessary.

4.2. Demobilisation documents

An official demobilisation document is an important protection instrument for the children. Children consistently report that finding their families and getting their demobilisation document are their central preoccupations. To date, the process of getting individual demobilisation orders involves the RCD-Goma hierarchy for all cases. Upon release, the local commander signs a provisory demobilisation order. Save the Children developed a form whereby the RCD-Goma local authorities attest to a list of children demobilised and in the care of the child protection organisations pending reintegration (see annexes).

The next step is to send the request for individual documents to the Major General of the RCD-Goma. This implies a significant logistical and administrative task of preparing individual forms, sending them to Goma for signature, and then ensuring their return to the individual child. Staff

involved with child soldiers in North and South Kivu report that the process of getting the individual demobilisation orders requires, on average, one month.

Faustin's story

"It was two years ago when the RCD passed through our village and gathered many youth. As I was only 13, a commander with good will took me as a guard at his house. I was relieved by this because before I was incapable of doing the military work and was whipped.

Happily, in early 2002, the military authorities from Goma demobilised a number of children. Some children returned home on their own. I was taken by the military to Sake and then walked home.

But later at home, I was harassed by other members of the RCD. Fortunately, I saw some agents from ICRC in our area. They took me to Goma to protect me and to request the military authorities to give me my demobilisation order.

I was temporarily cared for by CAJED. This center is very useful because they take care of all categories of children. Upon returning to my village, I felt relieved because I had my official documents and could continue my studies without fear."

There has been some level of debate as to whether a child should leave the transit centre to be reunified before receiving the individual demobilisation document. A similar debate has concerned the situation of self-demobilised children – many whom have independently returned to their families – and whether they should be sent to transit centres to wait for their demobilisation orders. For example, in discussions with a group of self-demobilised children at the BVES transit centre in Bukavu, a significant number of them expressed a high level of frustration over waiting at the transit centre for their demobilisation documents. In contrast, one of the local partners working at the community reintegration level in Bukavu, SACD, has worked with a number of cases of self-demobilised children to facilitate their demobilisation documents without sending them to the transit centre.

The evaluation for this paper found that it is not *per se* necessary that a child receives his demobilisation order before proceeding with family reunification. In many cases, family tracing has been found to proceed very quickly, the child faces no particular protection risk in his community and the network of partners could facilitate the delivery of the final official document to the child. Analysis is required in each case, as some children live in precarious situations, hiding from area military authorities even where they have managed to return to their home communities.

It is also important to note that, to date, demobilisation documents concern work with the RCD-Goma and geographical areas under their control. The RCD-Goma has issued demobilisation orders for children who previously were involved in other groups, such as those among captured Maï Maï forces, but more problematic are cases of demobilised children whose communities have fallen under the control of other armed groups. This issue requires further advocacy work as contact with various armed groups is extended by child protection organisations and other actors involved in the peace process.

4.3. Alternatives to transit centres

Two situations require further analysis and programme development of alternatives to transit centre care. The first, and perhaps most important, concerns cases of children who cannot go back to their family or community in the short term. Such cases may involve difficulties in family tracing, a particular protection concern or problems of access and security. In fact, a few cases in North and South Kivu have required care in the transit centre for more than three months and a number of cases have had to return to transit centre care following protection concerns in their home community.

Jacques' story

"I come from a modest family. In the beginning of 2001, at age 12, I was grabbed by Mongol militia in our village and taken to the forest. We suffered a lot because we were always moving and regularly attacked. To survive, we had to pillage goods from the population.

After many months, in addition to combat between our group and the RCD, there were frequent revolts by our chiefs against the Interahamwe in our group. Our chiefs decided to end their solidarity with the Interahamwe and moved part of our group to Mushaki. At Mushaki, by luck, the military authorities demobilised the children in our group.

After our demobilisation ceremony on 2 April 2002, I was cared for at the Save the Children/DIVAS transit centre and finally, a local NGO took me home to my parents in July 2002.

Unfortunately, when we arrived at my village, we discovered it burned and the neighbours told us that my mother had died and my father had fled. This is why the local NGO took me back to the DIVAS transit centre. Now I am staying in another center in Goma where I am following some training but my greatest hope is that my father will be found so that I can rejoin him."

The need for interim care alternatives is also important towards ensuring the 'transitory' nature and objective of the transit centres. Indeed the development of alternatives reflects best practice regarding non-institutional approaches to care.⁹ One of the strongest concerns expressed by some of the children in the transit centres concerns their frustration when watching other colleagues go home. The cases from the more distant locations, including as far away as Mbuji Mayi and Kisangani in other Provinces, asked if they might be transferred to centres in those cities simply to feel closer to possible family and community connections.

In view of ongoing security concerns, the best approach is likely to be a network of alternative care options in the same Provincial capital cities as the transit centres. For example, the Save the Children broader child protection programme has established a successful network of 'transit families' for cases of separated children in Bukavu and Goma. The 'transit families' are part of a formal programme where, similar to Western concepts of foster families, they provide family-based care for a relatively short period of time and agree to the eventual family reunification of the child. Further analysis of this model is needed for cases of demobilised children. Analysis should include systems for selecting 'transit families', matching families and children, monitoring placements and protection procedures.

The second situation requiring alternatives to transit centres concerns the geographical dispersion of programme activities for child soldiers. There have been a number of instances where a local commander agrees to demobilise a small group of children and then logistical issues arise regarding their immediate care and transfer to the transit centres. In another example, there have been cases where children are demobilised locally, their home communities are nearby

and no family or community reunification problems exist. In such situations, they require local interim care that enhances the efficiency of family reunification, rather than being transferred to the Provincial capital.

Such situations have to date been managed relatively well by the network of local organisations working in partnership with Save the Children. However, this system needs to be more formalised with common guidelines and criteria. Further assessment should also look at where and how capacity may be enhanced for small-scale interim care situations.

Identifying partners and models for more geographically dispersed interim care is vital to the prospects of extending work with child soldiers to other armed groups. In fact, SC and a local partner have made important progress in such discussions with a group, called Madundu 40, operating in South Kivu. Early assessments indicate that the majority of the children involved in this group are from local communities and have maintained some family communications. In fact analysis suggests it is in the children's best interest to be reunified from a local operating point rather than being transferred to the Bukavu transit centres. Discussions are ongoing between Save the Children, local partners, the leadership of this armed group and other local and Provincial authorities.

Notes

¹ In a demonstration of how families have maintained contact during the conflict, former child soldiers passing through the transit centre have described maintaining family contacts through 'line 11'. In their jargon, 'line 11' means a place 'in the bush', near their military camp, where they exchange messages with relatives and friends. Sometimes they send letters with businessmen or other persons who travel between villages.

² While issues of psychosocial distress have not been a particular concern in the programme in North and South Kivu, it should also be noted that Save the Children and local partners expect such issues to be more prominent if child soldier work can proceed in Ituri District. In contrast to other areas, the child protection team has found a pattern in Ituri District where children, including girls and very young children, are sent to join armed groups (or 'the movement') by their parents. Through child protection work with local organisations, in a few cases, Save the Children has been able to help parents approach the armed group to request the return of their children.

³ In Bunia, Ituri District of Province Orientale, Save the Children is embarking on an interesting model that seeks to address the question of competition between organisations and transparent capacity building. Despite a highly difficult conflict environment, Save the Children has been working with local organisations to reunify more than 800 separated children. In building on this towards working with child soldiers, a transit centre is under preparation where DIVAS and two local NGOs will each form part of the staff.

⁴ The evaluation of the Kimwenze centre in Kinshasa underscored the drawbacks of working with a single, large centre: 'Evaluation de la phase pilote du Programme de démobilisation et réinsertion des enfants soldats dans la région de Kinshasa', Sylvie Bodineau, Consultant, UNICEF et BUNADER, Novembre 2002.

⁵ Save the Children has adopted a Child Protection Policy globally and seeks to apply it in each field programme and in all partner agreements (see annexes for a copy of the policy). The Policy includes: an engagement to prevent and respond to cases of abuse, a code of conduct, a procedure for staff or partners to raise concerns, and ensuring information relating to child abuse and Save the Children's approach is included in personnel processes. Further information can be obtained from Save the Children.

⁶ The methodologies of family tracing are also referred to as IDTR – Identification, Documentation, Tracing and Reunification.

⁷ The Don Bosco centre in Goma has no entry criteria. It is open to all children in the community, many of whom are street children or children out of school. They report that on average, some 300 children are accommodated in the dormitories for various reasons of not wanting to, or being able to, live at home.

⁸ For example, some staff in the SOS Grands Lacs centre reported that they gave a kit containing: two blankets, some kitchen utensils, a hoe and seeds in a carry-bag. They explained this kit was provided when they had three

months UNICEF funding but was inconsistently continued due to funding limitations. However, others interviewed contradicted this information.

⁹ For more information see International Save the Children Alliance, (no date) *A Last Resort: The growing concern about children in residential care*, Save the Children's position on residential care (available from www.savethechildren.net); also McConnan and Uppard (2001) *Children not Soldiers: Guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces*, Save the Children UK (available from www.savethechildren.org.uk)

Chapter 5

Reintegration: a community approach

The reintegration phase of the work with child soldiers in North and South Kivu has emphasised family reunification and varying levels of socio-economic activities through community-based organisations. The most pivotal ongoing debates concern the meaning of a community approach to reintegration. The evaluation for this paper found a profusion of terms and unclear roles and objectives between actors and partners to be an underlying element in the debates. This chapter addresses these debates, presents the community approach and highlights particular issues and activities for future programme work with child soldiers.

Figure 7: Save the Children summary of case follow-up status – 1999-2002

	Present at CTO (Centre de Transit et d'Orientation) (as of 31 Dec 2002)			Runaway from CTO	Reintegrated			
	Cases waiting < 3 months	Cases waiting > 3 months	Cases returned		Via transfer ¹	Follow-up ongoing	Follow-up unknown ²	Re-recruited
North Kivu	17	4	3	7	103	117	80	10
South Kivu	13	9	6 ³	71 ⁴	67	231	68	156

Context is an imperative point of departure for the programme in DRC. Virtually all of the communities to which children are returning have suffered some 20 years of increasing poverty and many have been displaced and looted multiple times. Save the Children's work with the CCPNs has consistently found that child soldiers are not seen as the most vulnerable children within a community. Programmes for demobilised children, or 'DDR' generally, cannot solve the complex social and economic development needs of a given community.

5.1. The context of reintegration and follow-up

In some cases, the child soldier programme in North and South Kivu has only been able to facilitate family reunification. There is very little opportunity for follow-up information on those cases that have been reunified to other Provinces.⁵ There are other cases where Save the Children and partners have been able to reunify the child but there is not a regular partner through which to conduct follow-up activities.

Figure 8: Transfers to other locations

To	From S Kivu	From N Kivu
Province Orientale	4	18
Maniema	15	19
N. Katanga	5	9
Lubumbashi	0	1
Kinshasa	0	1
Kasai Orientale	0	16
Rwanda	6	8
Axes in N. & S. Kivu without local partners	37	31
Total	67	103

In almost all cases, the ongoing conflict is a constraint to Save the Children and local partners in accessing individual children for follow-up. Security issues can cause significant delays in family tracing and have created situations where children cannot be reunified. However, it is important to stress that such situations are localised and the majority of children have been able to be reintegrated.

Where there is a CCPN or active local organisation, Save the Children integrates support activities for demobilised children into other child protection activities. Thus the question of reintegration returns us to the beginning of this paper – the CCPNs. In addition, for demobilised children, a local organisation is selected by the community network to undertake follow-up actions at the individual level. This includes follow-up visits and micro-projects such as literacy classes, livestock, or small-scale vocational training. The role of CCPNs and local organisations thus includes:

- € networking and facilitating roles, including family or community mediation as necessary and negotiating access or participation in particular projects
- € implementing micro-projects, such as literacy classes or livestock projects.

5.2. Addressing the criticism of insufficient follow-up

The main criticism investigated for this paper was that there was insufficient follow-up of the children outside of family reunification. This criticism was found to stem from a fear that if the demobilised children are insufficiently ‘economically independent’, they will return to a military group.

The question of re-recruitment

One of the fears expressed in the critique that the children are inadequately followed up is that the children will re-join an armed group because of the poverty of their family. Analysis of follow-up data and community discussions reveals that re-recruitment results more from harassment and force by local military authorities than from the child’s choice. As a general estimate, the Save the Children’s child protection team estimates that only five per cent of cases of re-recruitment are voluntary while 85 per cent are re-recruited by force and ten per cent by harassment or incitement. Further, the cases of re-recruitment depend very much on specific geographic areas: 69 per cent of the cases of re-recruitment occurred in two locations in South Kivu featuring a recommencement of active conflict.

Following up cases of re-recruitment is also complicated by the age of the child. A review of the data shows that 62 per cent of those re-recruited were over 18 years of age. While forcible recruitment should be denounced at any age, for practical reasons, following up such cases is beyond the scope of activities for child protection organisations.

Claude's story

Claude was forcibly recruited by the RCD-Goma in his village at age 15. He fought in many battles. When his group was finally in Bukavu, he was demobilised by his commander.

Two months later, he was reunified with his mother. But a few days later, local military officials forcibly re-recruited him and sent him to the front. Fortunately his group was sent through Bukavu where military commanders remembered him and re-sent him to the Save the Children-DIVAS centre.

Claude was again re-recruited by local officials after being reintegrated a second time. But during a battle, he was able to run away and finally made his way back to the Bukavu transit centre on his own. Claude remains at the centre and Save the Children is still trying to find a solution for him.

Re-recruitment enticed by money and the question of poverty

Some demobilised children become discouraged by the poverty of their family and community and are tempted by the promises of certain military officials. Indeed, throughout the conflict, recruitment has been facilitated by the belief that armed groups pay salaries of \$100 a month. This belief initiated with the AFDL during their recruitment drives in 1996 and 1997. Indeed, some children report to have once or twice received this \$100 payment. However, demobilised children unanimously report that their commanders rarely fulfilled these promises and that they were routinely mistreated. The programme has found that the majority of demobilised children intensely prefer to return to their family and community (compared to their experience of military life).

The programme in North and South Kivu has not included any monetary payments to demobilising children – from the RCD-Goma, Save the Children or other actors in the programme. There have been a few instances of ‘rumours’ that an armed group would receive some form of payment as part of agreeing to demobilise children. Indeed care is needed to ensure that an armed group does not benefit materially from child demobilisation programmes. This would in turn risk further recruitment in order to maintain the appearance of demobilisation.

The question of monetary payments is important in harmonising efforts with child soldiers nationally. The pilot demobilisation near Kinshasa in 2001 struggled with such and included payments by the government to demobilising children. Further, the question will arise nationally in the context of demobilisation for adults. Globally, DDR programmes often include monetary payments to demobilising soldiers and there are often difficult debates regarding the inclusion of children in such benefits. From the experience of the programme in North and South Kivu, especially in a context of ongoing conflict, monetary payments in child soldier DDR efforts are not recommended. In the context of widespread poverty and vulnerability, such payments risk favouring child soldiers at the expense of other conflict-affected children and risk expanding recruitment or re-recruitment.

The question of re-recruitment also concerns the social follow-up role of the community. This has been an area of emphasis in Save the Children's work with the community networks – both in creating an advocacy environment to prevent the recruitment of children and in creating a

system where such cases can be redressed. CCPN and the Coalition have created a framework of quite successful monitoring, reporting and action on such cases.

Concepts of follow-up

The belief behind the criticism of insufficient follow-up is that demobilised children should all be enrolled in vocational training projects. Such an orientation to follow-up focuses on the idea of economic independence for the children rather than community approaches. Those arguing for vocational training feel that individual self-sufficiency should be the objective of support activities. In such arguments, one often finds claims that parents lack the responsibility to care for their own children. To the contrary, research with communities finds family livelihood support to be the more effective reintegration strategy.

5.3. Assessments and analysis behind the community approach

In the evaluation for this paper, it was learned that many military or civil authority actors and some local organisations believe individual vocational training projects are the solution to reintegrating demobilised children but that the communities, families and most children themselves, desire more flexible and diversified, community-based approaches. The Save the Children team, and many other international and local actors, remain convinced that a community-based approach is the most appropriate and effective way to support the reintegration of demobilised children. Globally, best practice stresses that the focus of reintegration should be on improving the availability of health care, education and other key services in communities where children are being reintegrated. Save the Children bases its conviction to the community approach on a number of experiences and specific evaluations in DRC, including:

1. focus group sessions held with six communities as part of the evaluation for this paper
2. specific evaluations commissioned by Save the Children for the child soldiers programme⁶
3. participatory research with community networks
4. Household Economy Assessments (HEA)
5. analysis of case follow-up issues with partners.

In focus groups conducted as part of the evaluation for this paper,⁷ communities and demobilised children explained that the economic role of the child cannot be independent of the family and community. Highlights of their comments and observations include:

- € Self-sufficiency for children is a dream, not realistic. Children cannot be isolated but should be helped in concert with their families.
- € Assistance must be oriented through parents. If done in the presence of children and with awareness raising activities, it will improve parental care for all children.
- € Children want to evolve with their family without being stigmatised.
- € Rather than emphasising time in transit centres, the programme should prioritise social education and skills activities in the community.
- € Before the war, almost all the children participating in the discussion groups were in school.⁸
- € Regarding strategies to support demobilised children within their families, discussants consistently prioritised livestock and rotating credit schemes. Explanations emphasised

that a main impact of the conflict has been the pillaging of livestock and the disruption of markets due to insecurity.

- € Children emphasise that two or three activities, including education, are necessary at the same time for most effective reintegration.
- € Some community members, parents and children felt that local NGOs were only looking to their own funding in proposing activities but others felt they could play a complementary role to parents in conducting certain activities.
- € Some community members added peace education among the priorities for activities.

Summary analysis and conclusions of the assessments

In line with the origins of the child soldier programme in South Kivu, Save the Children has commissioned two external evaluations of reintegration approaches.⁹ The first, in the fall of 1999, was noted in Chapter 2 highlighting the experience of the first demobilisation. This evaluation found that rather than supporting 'reintegration kits', it would be preferable to adapt support to the family livelihood and community context.

Faustin's story

Faustin and a group of students were forcibly recruited from their school in Katanga Province. At first, the RCD-Goma group promised they would be freed after carrying the heavy arms and belongings to the airport. But they were forced onto the airplane. They fought in many battles and places in North and South Kivu.

Finally, at age 16, in late 2001 Faustin and some of his colleagues were demobilised in Goma. But they had to flee with the local population with the eruption of the volcano in January 2002.

Faustin and a group of his five fellow students were able to stay together. Four days after making their way west of Goma to search for a place to stay and means to eat, they fortunately came upon a vehicle of Save the Children. Save the Children moved the group to the Bukavu transit centre and two months later they were reunified with their families by the ICRC.

Faustin is the only boy in a family of 13 children and was happy to be reunified and to recommence his vegetable garden activities towards helping his family. His goal is to someday augment his economic means with fishing.

A second external evaluation was commissioned in early 2001. This evaluation worked with four communities in a participatory discussion of criteria and ranking of vulnerability for children. Orphans were ranked the most vulnerable followed by displaced, malnourished, children from poor families and demobilised children. Education was consistently ranked the highest need followed by access to health care, micro-credit and support for small-scale economic enterprises, including engaging unemployed youth.

As explained throughout this paper, Save the Children has developed the child soldier programme in parallel with and in conjunction with broader child protection work. Thus the question of reintegration approach has also benefited from participatory research activities with CCPN.¹⁰ Even in peri-urban environments, these research activities consistently emphasise the agro-pastoral nature of economic activity. In the area of agriculture, problems consistently noted include insufficient land distribution, exaggerated taxes by various authorities, deflated prices, access to markets, insufficient mills or other such production resources and non-functioning co-operatives. Livestock has been especially systematically pillaged. While some industrial

agricultural activities, such as coffee and quinine, were important in some areas, these activities have also been greatly reduced during the conflict.

While playing a small role in economic activities, especially of poor households, other activities noted have included fishing and small-scale production of tools (such as hoes and machetes) and products of wood and pottery. Key problems noted include tax issues, access to markets and very weak prospects for clientele.

The exploitation of natural resources¹¹ has also had an impact on economic activity patterns. Many men have left their families to seek opportunities in mining in areas where there is high insecurity; the work leads to frequent conflicts between various parties. However, recent community research indicates that lower prices for coltan in the global market have reduced this activity.

While not conducted specifically for the child soldier programme, the findings of Household Economic Assessments¹² conducted by Save the Children have helped to confirm the most appropriate livelihood approaches. For example, the assessments highlight that diversification of economic activities is linked to the overall income of the family. Poorer households rely on paid agricultural labour (in the fields of better-off households) for a significant percentage of their income plus other sources, such as transporting goods, the purchase and resale of staple foods, small-scale artisan activities and woodcutting. Middle level households rely on their own crop production complemented by petty trade, brewing and livestock sale. Save the Children's work to date with HEA shows generally that livelihood issues are tools (rather than seeds) for agriculture, reduced access to markets and loss of livestock. Livestock projects are felt to require further assessment and strategising but are felt to be a fundamental factor in improving livelihoods.

In demonstrating the community approach, it is also important to look to the experience of other organisations. During the evaluation for this paper, interesting parallels were found between Save the Children's work with community networks and the incorporation of 'social mobilisation' by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in South Kivu. The social mobilisation staff have found constant engagement with the community, throughout a project, to be essential to its success. In other words, social mobilisation staff conduct participatory research with communities to identify priority needs, the most vulnerable families, and the most credible partners, and then follow up regularly with the community throughout the project to ensure its efficacy and transparency. As with Save the Children, PRA is the preferred methodology used by the IRC social mobilisation team. Similar to the change Save the Children made to working through CCPNs, this is a more active approach to project implementation through local organisations. As a recent external evaluation of Save the Children's work with community networks in Kinshasa emphasised, reinforcing capacity does not equal financing a project.

5.4. What is a community approach to reintegration?

The introduction to this chapter noted that unclear roles and a profusion of terms have contributed to the debate in understanding a community approach to reintegration. The evaluation for this paper found that most actors have come to embrace this approach but sometimes have different views of what the approach should entail or prioritise. Part of what a community approach means is an integration of a variety of terms often discussed as separate steps: family reunification, social reinsertion, socio-economic reinsertion, community reintegration and follow-up. In other words, a community approach to reintegration includes:

- € family reunification or other appropriate extended or foster family situation
- € social support, notably the role of community members in advising, mediating, and facilitating reintegration
- € opportunity to participate in civil life, including:
 - educational opportunity – this may be reinsertion into formal schooling or, more likely, informal literacy or accelerated learning opportunities
 - livelihood opportunity – participating in the livelihood of their family facilitates a positive role and a path to the future for the child. In this sense, any economic or livelihood oriented activity is adapted to the level of child and his/her family.

An integrated community approach to reintegration also means that activities for demobilised children are integrated with activities for all vulnerable children. In this sense, Save the Children's activities to support school and clinic rehabilitation or literacy classes benefit many children without stigmatising or favouring child soldiers. In the evaluation for this paper, some organisations criticised the school and clinic rehabilitation activities as not going far enough to address, for example, the issues of fees, supplies and uniforms that form part of the obstacles to access to education. While there may be some inconsistencies in follow-up, Save the Children's policy on rehabilitating schools is to include physical structure rehabilitation, didactic materials and supplies. Save the Children feels that it is actually important to ask parents to be responsible for the school fees as an element of sustainability and value. It is important to note that the child soldier programme in North and South Kivu has had insufficient resources and is still developing activities in the areas of social support, education and livelihood.

Family reunification, alternatives and difficult case work

Family reunification has already been presented in chapter 4. The transition phase emphasised that preparation for reunification must include an assessment of the community context in addition to the more technical side of family tracing. The assessment of the community context addresses issues where family mediation may be necessary, where neighbours may refuse the return of the child because of an unacceptable act committed during the conflict or where the security situation is too precarious.

Follow-up may especially be necessary where demobilised children have been returned to extended family members. Discussions with Save the Children partners note that children having problems with reintegration, and cases of harassment by various military authorities, are often orphans, living in extended families or in polygamous families. This highlights the complexity of vulnerability. However, this is the minority of cases. In a review of data on 541 children demobilised through the Bukavu transit centre:

- € 59 per cent were reunified with their biological parents
- € seven per cent were reunified with an older brother or sister
- € 11 per cent were reintegrated with a member of their extended family.¹³

Jean's story

At eight years old, Jean was forcibly recruited by the Mai Mai. He served as a spy; when there was a meeting of authorities in the village, he was sent to listen and bring back information.

One day Jean was captured and placed in the service of the RCD. He served as an escort to a commander. One day the commander ordered Jean to kill a pregnant woman who had been a neighbour of Jean. He killed the woman but was subsequently apprehended and brought to Bukavu to be tried by the military tribunal.

The military tribunal found Jean innocent and ordered his liberation. At this time Jean was 13 years old. Jean was then officially demobilised and Save the Children was able to take him to the transit centre.

But the community did not want Jean to return because of the crime he had committed. Save the Children began mediation work with a local NGO partner. The process was long and exhaustive; it was ten months before the negotiations were successful. As part of the final arrangements, Jean's family contributed to the dowry, of another family, to be paid to the husband of the murdered woman.

Finally, Jean rejoined his family where relations with the community are now going smoothly.

Social reintegration and child participation

The social aspects of reintegration include the permanent follow-up role of the child's family, extended family and key community members. Their role and capacity to support and advise demobilised children is ultimately more essential to reintegration than the role of local organisations or the staff of organisations like Save the Children.

This role of family and community addresses another aspect of criticism regarding follow-up. There are a number of misunderstandings about a policy adopted by Save the Children to request three month follow-up reports on demobilised children from their local partners (see annexes for a sample form). While the partners are not remunerated on the basis of the follow-up reports, the policy has become understood to be the limit of the local organisation's role with the demobilised child. While some cases may progress easily in reintegration in three months, others require more frequent and longer-term support by community agents other than the family.

Save the Children's intent is to support the capacity of the community networks and local organisations to provide ongoing support and advocacy for children in need of special protection assistance – such as demobilised children. The three-month or other reports from individual follow-up family visits simply provide a monitoring and evaluation tool. Discussions for this evaluation emphasised that three-month follow-up visits, or other time period standards, should be seen as the minimum.

The social aspects of reintegration can also build on the CCPNs to facilitate and promote social activities that engage former child soldiers in civilian life. Religious activities, sports, cultural events, youth dance or theatre groups can all contribute to the social reintegration of demobilised children. Extremely few examples of such activities have been implemented in the first three years of the programme in North and South Kivu and this is an area that requires greater attention.

Demonstrating the importance of such activities, in discussions with Save the Children partners for this paper, a leader with the Federation of Scouts in North Kivu stressed the very positive experience of his organisation in integrating six demobilised children (from two different armed groups) into their activities. He stressed that this contributed to the peace education learning of both the demobilised children and other children. In another example, a local Save the Children partner in South Kivu, Carefour des Enfants du Congo (CARECO), has had some success with child participation through a ‘children’s parliament’ activity.¹⁴ As part of the ‘parliament’, some 200 children prepare advocacy messages to local authorities and reach out to their peers through home visits, special events and radio messages. A group of the children has even been instrumental in convincing a group of local authorities to commence discussions on demobilising and reintegrating children involved with a local armed group.

Beyond follow-up visits – which activities?

With limited resources, to varying degrees, Save the Children has been able to incorporate some children into projects with local organisation partners. These early projects have focused on access to basic services, especially education, and livelihood.

Save the Children supports specific activities through two modalities. First, some activities reach many children, such as improving school and health facilities or water and sanitation. The second modality is the micro-projects first described in section 2.1. These activities address more individual or family needs of reintegrated child soldiers but are inclusive of other vulnerable children in the community. Micro-project activities have included:

- € providing literacy classes or other accelerated education classes
- € facilitating the return of some cases to formal schooling
- € supporting agricultural activities for the demobilised child and his family, such as providing seeds and tools
- € implementing small livestock programmes, such as rabbits or chickens
- € conducting other micro-projects aimed at vocational skill building and income generating, such as carpentry and sewing/tailoring.

Figure 9: Summary of Save the Children socio-economic activities¹⁵

						Literacy ¹⁶				
	Formal school	Literacy	Agriculture	Small livestock	Petty trade	Carpentry	Sewing Tailoring	Mechanics	Hair cutting	Other
N Kivu Goma area	—	—	1	1	1	2	—	1	1	2
N Kivu more rural axes	14	7	21	66	—	—	—	—	—	—
S Kivu Bukavu area	19	—	—	—	21	22	3	9	3	5
S Kivu more rural axes	40	—	31	1	16	—	13	—	—	—

Education

Education is passionately desired by demobilised children and their families but presents extremely difficult obstacles. Both access to and quality of education in DRC, has deteriorated significantly in recent years due to the conflict and development setbacks. Government statistics report enrolment rates dropping from 94 per cent in 1978 to 60 per cent in 1998.

Today, in Provinces like North and South Kivu, rates are estimated to be a fraction of the 1998 rates. Data on the first group of children demobilised in 1999 in Bukavu is illustrative. Of this group, 66.7 per cent had some degree of primary education, 8.9 per cent had attained some level of secondary education and 24.4 per cent were illiterate. Those having a primary level were between the ages of 12 and 19 and had been out of school for some time before they were recruited.

Like the health system, remaining formal education is self-financing in that salaries and all expenses of the school have to be covered by student fees. Many families can only afford to send one child to school and that child will most often be a boy. Primary school fees average \$2 to \$4 per trimester plus \$5 to \$10 annually for school supplies and uniforms. To put this in perspective, a Save the Children HEA in North Kivu found average annual incomes for poor households to be \$140.

Thus the reality is that the minority of demobilised children will be able to be reinserted into formal schooling. For those that can, the programme has emphasised catch-up classes and working with education authorities to facilitate access. A key point for advocacy has been addressing the rigidities of age limits per academic level of the Congolese system. The programme has been able to get the authorities to suspend these restrictions. This greatly facilitates the reintegration of conflict-affected children who have missed years of schooling for multiple reasons. The evaluation for this paper was unable to assess the consistency with which the policy is applied, but, anecdotally, informal interviews with demobilised children and communities show cases where teachers or local school authorities refuse to accept the suspension. This underscores the importance of mechanisms, such as the CCPN, where local monitoring and advocacy is consistent in following up such issues.

In the face of these realities, literacy and other non-formal education opportunities are a priority. Under DIVAS (rather than the Ministry of Education) DRC has a fairly well established literacy curriculum and accreditation system. While nascent and with limited resources, the Save the Children programme has supported a number of local partners to implement literacy courses as part of their work with vulnerable children, including demobilised children. In South Kivu, Save the Children and local partners have combined literacy or non-formal education with vocational training activities. Examples of the costs of such micro-projects are elaborated below but literacy micro-projects have generally cost up to \$5,000. For example, the total budget for one six-month micro-project was \$5,100 with the majority of the costs being for rehabilitating classrooms and pedagogical and other educational materials, plus \$840 in incentive payments to community activists and instructors.

Economic or livelihood activities

As noted in the assessments determining the community reintegration approach, economic activity is largely agro-pastoral, even in peri-urban environments. Save the Children and local partners implementing livelihood activities, through micro-projects, are still in the early phase of their experience. Most micro-projects are oriented to small-scale vocational skills, such as carpentry and sewing. However, the evaluation for this paper found the agriculture and livestock

activities to be the most effective because they facilitate the most immediate and tangible impact on family livelihood.

While a number of international organisations are involved in agricultural support activities, such as seed and tool distribution, Save the Children finds that livestock contribute an important percentage of a family's economic resources. Traditionally, poorer households have small livestock, such as rabbits and chickens, rather than larger livestock such as goats or cattle.

Save the Children's support for the livestock projects primarily means financing the start up costs of a base of reproductive animals. Individual micro-projects have budgets of around \$1,000 to \$3,500 covering short-term human resources, start up costs of materials and reproductive animals and initial feed and veterinary costs. The first micro-projects have reached 60 to 80 families each in their first rotation. The ongoing role of the local organisation includes:

- € providing hands-on training in the care and reproduction of the rabbits or chickens
- € providing expertise in the case of illnesses
- € managing the base stock and rotating credit element of the project.

As an example, the rabbit livestock projects work generally as follows: a child receives a pregnant rabbit and passes one of the offspring back to the local organisation to contribute to the rotating resources for future children and families. A rabbit produces four to five offspring with each pregnancy and, with the possibility of pregnancies every three months, may produce 16 to 20 offspring per year. The price in the local market for a rabbit averages \$3 to \$5. This may be modest income for a child and his, or her, family, but one can see how the addition of small livestock to economic resources helps to cover school or health fees.

Micro-projects for small-scale vocational skills have focused on carpentry and tailoring. These projects are more expensive, averaging \$3,500 to \$5,500. Again, these costs have entailed financing the start-up costs to establish the training facility and implement the first six-month course. While still in their first cycles of implementation, the projects aim to reach between 50 and 100 children – some of whom are demobilised children – in each course. While practical reporting on the results or impact of these micro-projects is not yet feasible, the evaluation for this paper found few indications that these activities would provide an effective approach to reintegration.

How appropriate is vocational training

Historical experience with fairly sophisticated vocational training programmes in DRC contributes to the predisposition to this approach by many authorities and some local organisations. However, the context, economically and due to the conflict, raises a number of cautions:

1. Vocational training programmes require an education level that has been found to be higher than the majority of the demobilised child soldiers. To compensate, the current vocational training micro-projects emphasise more hands-on learning and they add literacy classes. However, questions have still been raised in community discussions about the resulting skill level of the children and whether such training projects will, regardless, reach a limited number of beneficiaries. Indeed lessons learned globally show that participation in such training courses is often by the more educated male youth. Perhaps unintentionally, the youth most in need of support and skills, especially girls, are often excluded.

2. The historical, more sophisticated vocational training programmes incorporated self-financing measures and schemes to provide graduates with initial materials needed to apply their trade. Extremely few of the current micro-projects by local organisations incorporate these elements. For example, in one of the sewing micro-projects, the local organisation received funding for start up costs, including 15 sewing machines, to conduct six-month training sessions, at no charge, for vulnerable children. The project incorporates no plans – such as credit, apprenticeships or co-operative use of machines – to support graduates in applying their skill. Further, the projects feature little planning or monitoring of training outcomes.
3. Market analysis and realities in each trade and in each community must be taken into account. For example, a well-established vocational training school in Bukavu,¹⁷ with some previous experience in adapting programmes for demobilised and other vulnerable children, declined requests to participate in the current child soldier programme. They explained that the market was impossible for even their best trained graduates.

Unfortunately, engaging demobilised children in a six-month course provides a short-term opportunity to ‘occupy’ the child but is an inadequate approach to reintegration. In one community, demobilised children resisted the efforts of a local organisation to enrol them in a sewing course because they felt their previous observations showed such training to be unfruitful.

Drawing from other experiences, an evaluation of vocational training for demobilised adults in El Salvador showed that only 25 per cent found work in the area for which they were trained.¹⁸ Globally, other experiences with vulnerable youth emphasise that:

- € vocational skills training must be based on market analysis and consultation with tradespeople and must be able to evolve as the market changes
- € youth must be highly involved in decision-making and project implementation
- € because the costs of vocational training are fairly high, programmes must recognise that training opportunities will reach a limited number of beneficiaries and so plan a full programme of more inclusive opportunities for others.

Even in more urban environments, Save the Children is finding vocational skill projects less effective than anticipated. For example, an external evaluation of such projects in Kinshasa found the tailoring and hairdressing projects for girls to be the least effective,¹⁹ primarily due to saturated markets. Tentative degrees of success were found in a community bakery project and a small-scale rabbit project. In another example in Kinshasa, Save the Children supported a fish and pig farming operation that included the objective of applying a portion of the profits to cover the school fees of 100 vulnerable children from member families. This is a valuable idea but the external evaluation found that the potential profits and necessary budget for the school fees and materials had not been analysed and sustainability was unlikely. The only project found to be particularly effective was a co-operative gardening project. A key difference in this micro-project was the level of group organisation before financial support.

Even Don Bosco in Goma, which has long-term experience with street children and vocational training activities, commented in discussions for this paper that rather than vocational training, the priority was to progressively engage children in concrete, constructive activity. Given the minimum training period for many vocational skills, smaller scale and more hands-on activities (such as livestock rearing) are more effective.

On the other hand, some vocational training activities may be appropriate for some children. An illustrative example is an embroidery class run by one of Save the Children's local partners, SACD, in Bukavu. The embroidery class is for out-of-school girls in poor households and is complemented by literacy classes.²⁰ The embroidery activity is illustrative because it is self-financing and ensures that the girls are able to market their products. Market analysis was conducted to identify two products that would be popular with consumers – gift items for newborn babies and for weddings, selling for about \$3 each in local markets. As part of the course, the girls learn to make the items in three rotations. In the first rotation, the proceeds are returned to the local organisation to ensure ongoing consumable materials. In the final rotation, the girl keeps all of the proceeds and continues on her own. Money management is incorporated into the course to demonstrate how a portion of the proceeds goes to new material needs and a portion remains for other needs.²¹

The question of micro-credit or rotating credit schemes

A final note should be included concerning micro-credit or rotating credit schemes. These are often requested both by community research and by local organisations. Micro-credit is a complicated question in the conflict and poverty context of DRC and extremely few organisations are conducting these kinds of activities. Save the Children continues to evaluate this question, since, globally, micro-credit work is not part of its expertise and experience.

Notes

¹ Transfer cases are as explained in the table in Figure 8.

² Reasons for unknown follow-up status include the fact that the physical location has become insecure. In some situations, a local partner or community network may still have contact with the child but communications to Save the Children have become obstructed. Some partners suspend follow-up when the child becomes 18 years old and some partners only maintain follow-up reporting for three months. In many of these cases, family reunification was found to be successful and hence the local organisation did not maintain follow-up contact. In some cases, the child or family moves without informing the local partner.

³ Six cases where children returned to the Save the Children-DIVAS Bukavu transit centre were present as of the end of December 2002, but 58 such cases have occurred over the lifetime of the programme.

⁴ Most of the cases where children ran away from the transit centre occurred at the beginning of the programme when children were more frequently given false information about demobilisation by military authorities.

⁵ During the fieldwork for this evaluation, plans and funding were being finalised for a consortium of NGOs to initiate work with child soldiers in other Provinces in Eastern DRC. Save the Children welcomes this move towards increasing the network of organisations for follow-up and expanding harmonisation of programme principles and approaches.

⁶ These evaluation reports, detailed in the bibliography are: 'Rapport de l'Enquete sur la Réinsertion Sociale des Enfants Demobilises de l'Armée', November 1999 and 'Evaluation des Besoins des Enfants Vulnérables dans les Territoires de Kabare et de Walungu', March 2001.

⁷ Focus groups were conducted in six communities with CCPNs. Separate sessions were organised in each community with community network members, parents, demobilised children and other children.

⁸ Some children used figures like 99 per cent being in school before the war; adding that this was often despite disruptions due to difficulties in paying school fees. Perhaps more accurate, in one focus group, 16 out of 20 demobilised children were in school before the war. As another example of why this may be more accurate, 24.4 per cent of the first group of children demobilised were illiterate.

⁹ 'Rapport de l'Enquete sur la Réinsertion Sociale des Enfants Demobilises de l'Armée', November 1999 and 'Evaluation des Besoins des Enfants Vulnérables dans les Territoires de Kabare et de Walungu', March 2001.

¹⁰ See 'MARPA Matanda et Minova' draft report, Save the Children, North Kivu, 2002.

¹¹ For reference see the United Nations Security Council, 'Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo', 16 October 2002, S/2002/1146, and previous reports of the Panel of Experts.

¹² The most recent Save the Children HEA report is 'Household Economy Analysis of the Rural Population of South-Western Bwito, Rutshuru, North Kivu, DRC', January 2003. Information concerning HEA can be found in the Save the Children manual, *Household Economy Approach: A resource manual for practitioners*.

¹³ The remaining cases in this review (118 out of 541) were reintegrated, mostly through ICRC, to geographical areas where Save the Children has no programmes or partners for gathering follow-up information. However, these cases should also be considered as reunified with their families, or extended families, as ICRC only transports a child when a family reunification prospect has been confirmed.

¹⁴ One of the children active in the CARECO 'children's parliament' was selected to participate in the May 2002 UN Special Session on Children in New York.

¹⁵ This data is incomplete relative to total cases reintegrated as the detailed follow-up information was not available available from all partners in the timeframe of preparing this paper.

¹⁶ In South Kivu, activities in carpentry, sewing/tailoring and mechanics are combined with literacy classes whereas in North Kivu they are separate. Thus 47 cases in South Kivu have been engaged in literacy classes.

¹⁷ For readers familiar with DRC, this is the ITFM school (Institut Technique Fundi Maendeleo).

¹⁸ See Verhey, Beth, *Child Soldiers – Preventing, Demobilising and Reintegrating*, World Bank, 2001, <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/wps/wp23.pdf>. A French version can also be found at <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/ThemesChildrenandYouthChildSoldiers>

¹⁹ 'Save the Children UK: Evaluation of the Kinshasa Urban Project', January 2003.

²⁰ There are a lot of questions from global experience about such 'craft' courses – from gender empowerment and market feasibility perspectives. This activity remains illustrative for its practical considerations.

²¹ SACD has a similar self-financing carpentry course whose start-up costs were supported by Save the Children.

Annexes: Various forms used in the Save the Children programme

Save the Children Child Protection Policy

Our Commitment to Safeguard Children

Our values and principles

- € The abuse and exploitation of children happens in all countries and societies across the world.
- € All child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights.
- € The situation of *all* children must be improved through the promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation.
- € Child abuse is never acceptable and a commitment to children's rights in general also means a commitment to safeguard the children with whom Save the Children is in contact.

What will we do?

Save the Children will meet its commitment to safeguard through the following means:

- Awareness:** Ensuring that all staff and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.
- Prevention:** Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and others minimise the risks to children.
- Reporting:** Ensuring that staff and others are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.
- Responding:** Ensuring that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, Save the Children will also ensure that it:

- € takes seriously any concerns raised
- € takes positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- € supports children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- € acts appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation
- € is guided through the child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'
- € listens to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children
- € works in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

Child Protection Code of Conduct

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- € be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- € plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- € as far as possible, be visible in working with children
- € ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised or discussed
- € ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- € talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- € empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- € spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- € take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

Staff and others must never:

- € hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- € develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- € develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- € act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.

Staff and others *must* avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, they should never:

- € use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- € behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- € have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- € sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- € do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- € condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- € act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- € discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

Ordre de demobilisation individuelle

N° _____/ EMG/ _____

L'armée nationale Congolaise atteste par la présente que :

Monsieur (Mademoiselle) : _____

Lieu et date de naissance : _____

Fils (Fille) de : _____

Et de : _____

Originaire de la collectivité (Quartier, chefferie) de : _____

Territoire (commune) de : _____

Province de : _____

L'intéressé (e) est déchargé (e) de toutes ses obligations militaires et est libre de rejoindre sa famille.

L'armée nationale Congolaise du Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie demande aux autorités tant civiles que militaires de lui accorder toutes facilités nécessaires à son tour dans sa communauté d'origine et de sa réintégration dans la société civile et de bien vouloir lui assurer protection et sécurité.

Fait à Goma, le _____/ _____/ : 200

Le Chef d'Etat Major Général

Attestation de remise

Je soussigné Commandant : _____ atteste par la présente que les noms submentionnés sont démobilisés de l'armée et remis à l'organisation non gouvernementale Save the Children (UK) pour préparation à la réintégration sociale.

<i>N°</i>	<i>Noms et postnom de l'enfant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sexe</i>	<i>Observation</i>
01				
02				
03				
04				
05				
06				
07				
08				
09				
10				
11				
12				
13				

Fait à,..... le...../...../.....

Nom et signature du commandant

Nom de l'enfant :.....

Code de SC :.....

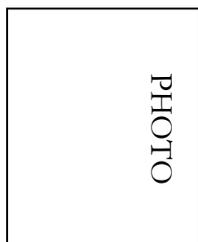
CONFIDENTIEL

Nom de l'enfant : _____

N° de référence : _____

Formulaire de documentation de l'enfant

Identite de l'enfant



Nom : _____

Prénom : _____

Surnom : _____

Sexe : _____ Nationalité : _____ Age : _____

Date de naissance : _____

Lieu de naissance : _____

(Préciser la commune, territoire et la province)

Signes particuliers : _____

Noms du père : _____

Noms de la mère : _____

Adresse actuelle de l'enfant

Centre de transit / Famille naturelle / Famille d'accueil / Autres _____

Adresse :

Province : _____ Territoire/commune : _____

Quartier / collectivité : _____ Avenue / Localité : _____

Occupation :

Ecole primaire/Ecole secondaire/Travail : _____

Autres occupations/ _____

Aucun : _____

Integration

Avec qui l'enfant voudrait être réunié :

Premier option

Nom : _____ Lien : _____

Province : _____ Terr. / Comm.: _____

Quart./Collect. : _____ Avenue/Localité : _____

Deuxième option

Nom : _____ Lien : _____

Province : _____ Terr. / Comm.: _____

Quart./Collect. : _____ Avenue/Localité : _____

Pourquoi l'enfant n'est pas réuni avec une des personnes mentionnées ci-dessus (encercler)
Trop jeune/Ne les aime pas/Ils sont trop pauvre/Il préfère rester au C.T/Aucun abri/manque de sécurité

Toutes autres raisons : _____

Expliquez avec beaucoup de détails le pourquoi : _____

Si la réunification familiale n'est pas une option qu'est ce que l'enfant propose :

Adoption

Installation

Rester au Centre de Transit

Vivre en famille auto-gérée

Autres possibilités : _____

Quelles sont les attentes de l'enfant pour l'avenir

Poursuivre ses études ? _____

A quelle école ? _____

Quelle profession ? _____

Où vivre ? _____

Autres : _____

L'action immédiate à entreprendre devrait avoir rapport avec les réponses sur les questions ci-dessus

Recherche familiale

Médiation familiale

Réunification familiale

Chercher la famille d'accueil

Installation avec :

D'autres enfants de sa catégorie _____

(Donner le nom et le lien)

Toute autre action recommandée

Autres commentaires de l'Agent Technique

Fait à : _____, le ____/____/____

Nom et signature de l'Agent

Histoire sur la mobilisation de l'enfant

1. Avec qui l'enfant vivait avant la mobilisation ?
Nom : _____ Lien : _____
Province : _____ Territoire/commune : _____
Quartier/Collect. : _____ Avenue/Localité : _____

2. Les circonstances de mobilisation :
Les raisons qui ont occasionné la mobilisation de l'enfant
(Commentaires et explications)

Date approximative de la mobilisation : _____ (Date)

3. Histoire de l'enfant étant déjà mobilisé :
Comment l'enfant est-il devenu mobilisé ?

4. Quelles ont été les responsabilités de l'enfant lors de la mobilisation ?

5. Quand est-ce que l'enfant a été démobilisé ? _____ (Date)

6. Comment l'a-t-il été ? _____

7. Où vit l'enfant actuellement ? Centre de Transit, Famille propre, Famille d'accueil
Autre (Encercler et préciser)
Si dans un centre quand l'enfant l'a-t-il quitté ? _____ (Date)

8. Quel est l'état de santé de l'enfant ?

a. Mental : _____

b. Physique : _____

9. Noter toutes les informations reçues auprès de l'enfant pouvant avoir des conséquences sur sa vie.

Fait à, le _____/ _____/ _____

Nom et signature de l'assistant social

Certificat de reintegration familiale de l'enfant demobilise

Je soussigné : _____ Lien avec l'enfant : _____

Carte d'identité N° : _____ délivrée à : _____, le ___/___/___

Résidant sur Avenue/Quartier : _____ Collectivité : _____

Commune/Territoire : _____ Province : _____

Déclare avoir reçu en ce jour, l'enfant : _____

Age : _____ Sexe : _____ après sa démobilisation formelle de l'armée pour réintégration au sein de ma famille.

Je m'engage à lui assurer des conditions de vie descentes, à respecter et à plaider pour que ses droits soient respectés et à tout mettre en oeuvre pour que sa réintégration au sein de ma famille et de la communauté soit effective.

Fait à : _____, le ___/___/___

Nom et signature du chef de la famille

Nom et signature de l'agent social

Signature de l'enfant

Sceau

VISA DE LA DIVAS

VISA DU CHEF DE QUARTIER
OU SON DELEGUE

Rapport de visite de suivi de l'enfant reintegre

Visite

n° : _____

Nom de l'enfant : _____ N° Réf. : _____

Date : _____ Heure : De : ____ à _____

L'enfant a été vu au moment de la visite ?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Appréciation générale de l'enfant visité

a. Statut nutritionnel : _____

b. Etat sanitaire et hygiénique général : _____

c. Avez-vous une inquiétude (un souci pour l'enfant ?) et pour quelle raisons particulières ?

d. Scolarisation (si possible) :

Comment l'enfant s'intègre-t-il dans sa famille ?

Que fait-il dans sa communauté ?

Observations additionnelles :

Est-il nécessaire d'effectuer d'autres visites de suivi ? Oui/Non

Pourquoi ?

Nom de l'Agent social Association : _____

Signature

Fait à _____ , le ____/_____/_____

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Going Home

Demobilising and reintegrating child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Save the Children UK is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, the world's leading independent children's rights organisation, with members in 29 countries and operational programmes in more than 100.

Save the Children works with children and their communities to provide practical assistance and, by influencing policy and public opinion, bring about positive change for children.

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