





## NOTE

This work is one of a number of Background Papers commissioned by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to help inform the project *European Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Explosive Remnants of War*.

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## SUMMARY

This paper examines the European Union (EU)'s approach to children and armed conflict, note the challenges faced by it, and suggest ways to improve both policy and action. It will also look at how far children's issues are related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming and small arms and light weapons (SALW)/explosive remnants of war (ERW) issues, and make practical suggestions on how children's concerns can and should be integrated more effectively into the EU's DDR, SALW and ERW programming. The paper is thus broken down into three sections: the first looks at the current EU approach to children and armed conflict; the second provides a thematic discussion of the key issues which should be addressed by DDR and SALW strategies to ensure that they contribute fully to the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict; the third section provides a conclusion and list of recommendations.



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## CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT: THE RESPONSE OF THE EU

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### INTRODUCTION

Of the 500,000 people estimated to be killed annually by small arms around the world,<sup>1</sup> the high numbers of youth who inflict and suffer from firearms homicide and injury makes them a group deserving special attention.<sup>2</sup> For children, the impact of conflict is severe. The number of child soldiers worldwide has been estimated at over 300,000.<sup>3</sup> For more children each day, the months and years required to create a comprehensive response to these problems are proving too long.

The European Union (EU) Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict of 8 October 2003 begin by noting the problems faced by conflict-affected children, mentioning the following:

- killing,
- maiming,
- loss of parents,
- loss of social services,
- loss of health care,
- loss of education,
- detention,
- abduction,
- trafficking,
- disruption of birth registration and juvenile justice,
- child participation in conflict,
- psychosocial problems,
- problems of reintegration, and
- lack of access to justice.

This paper examines the EU's approach to children and armed conflict, note the challenges faced by it, and suggest ways to improve both policy and action. It will also look at how far children's issues are related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming and small arms and light weapons (SALW)/explosive remnants of war (ERW) issues, and make practical suggestions on how children's concerns can and should be integrated more effectively into the EU's DDR, SALW and ERW programming. The paper is thus broken down into three sections: the first looks at the current EU approach to children and armed conflict; the second provides a thematic discussion of the key issues which should be addressed by DDR and SALW strategies to ensure that they contribute fully to the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict; the third section provides a conclusion and list of recommendations.

## THE EU'S WORK ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

### FOUNDATIONS OF THE EU APPROACH

#### Legal instruments protecting children

A variety of legal instruments aim to protect children in armed conflict.<sup>4</sup> Within the Geneva Conventions and their two additional protocols, 25 articles deal directly with children. In international armed conflicts, children are protected under Geneva Convention IV and Additional Protocol I from coercion, corporal punishment, torture, collective punishment and reprisals. During non-international armed conflicts, children are covered by fundamental guarantees for persons not taking direct part in hostilities,<sup>5</sup> and the principle that individual and collective civilians shall not be the object of attack. The Additional Protocols also ask, in international and non-international armed conflict, that children be the “object of special respect”, provided by the parties to the conflict with the “care and aid they require”.<sup>6</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) also prescribes non-derogable rights for children that must be respected at all times.<sup>7</sup> Under the Convention, states are bound to “take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict”.<sup>8</sup>

On the issue of children associated with armed forces, under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002) it is a war crime to conscript or enlist children under 15 years old into armed forces or groups.<sup>9</sup> International Labour Organization Convention 182 prohibits “forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in hostilities” as one of the worst forms of child labour. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2000) requires states bound by it to take all feasible measures to prevent under 18s within their armed forces from fighting; refrain from conscription of under 18s; raise the minimum age of voluntary recruitment from 15 years (except in military academies); ensure that voluntary recruitment of under 18s is genuinely voluntary, based on awareness of duties involved, conducted with parental consent and submission of reliable proof of age; and prevent all recruitment and use of under 18s by non-state armed groups.

The legal instruments discussed above make no specific link between SALW and the welfare of children. There are, however, UN instruments, which make the links between children, conflict and SALW issues.

#### UN instruments

UN Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) directs the Security Council to act on behalf of children in situations of armed conflict, and specifically mentions the “deleterious impacts” of small arms on civilians and particularly children.<sup>10</sup> Resolution 1314 (2000) notes how the illicit trafficking of SALW can prolong armed conflict and intensify its impact on children. The UN Programme of Action on SALW (2001) voices “grave concern” about the impact of conflict on children and child soldiers and calls for special attention to the needs of children in reintegration and rehabilitation programmes.<sup>11</sup> It also requires states to ensure that their national export regulations are consistent with their commitments under international law.

In Resolution 1539 of April 2004, the Security Council went even further in making links between children, armed conflict and SALW. The Resolution expresses the intention of the Security Council:

to take appropriate measures, in particular while considering subregional and cross-border activities, to curb linkages between illicit trade in natural and other resources, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, cross-border abduction and recruitment, and armed conflict, which can prolong armed conflict and intensify its impact on children, and consequently requests the Secretary-General to propose effective measures to control this illicit trade and trafficking.<sup>12</sup>

Also in Resolution 1539, the Security Council:


Takes note with deep concern of the continued recruitment and use of children by parties ... in situations of armed conflict [and e]xpresses its intention to consider imposing targeted and graduated measures, through country-specific resolutions, such as, inter alia, a ban on the export or supply of small arms and light weapons and of other military equipment and on military assistance, against these parties if they refuse to enter into dialogue, fail to develop an action plan or fail to meet the commitments included in their action plan.<sup>13</sup>

## THE EU APPROACH

### The EU guidelines on children and armed conflict

**Creation of the guidelines.** The Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict created in 2003 (hereafter the Guidelines) are the EU's first attempt to summarize EU policy on this issue, paving the way toward a more coherent and coordinated approach and determining the EU priorities for the coming years. The Guidelines were followed up by the compilation of a "Plan of Action" in late 2004, as well as a Report on their implementation.<sup>14</sup>

After summarizing the key problems and principles under which the EU will seek to tackle them, the Guidelines outline ways in which the EU will take the issue forward. These include monitoring and reporting, assessment and recommendations for action, relations with third countries (including political dialogue, démarches, support to projects (such as DDR), crisis management, early warning, preventative approaches, training (for crisis management) and "the imposition of targeted measures". The Guidelines also state that the EU will proactively cooperate with a list of relevant actors to strengthen and implement existing safeguards to the rights of the child.<sup>15</sup> The Guidelines make no specific reference to SALW, although they do mention DDR projects as part of the EU's response.

The Council Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM) oversees implementation of the Guidelines. As there is currently no budget line concentrating solely on children in armed conflict or focal point  momentum toward a coherent approach may prove painfully slow. Norms and commitments are already in place for acting on the issue of children in armed conflict, what is now needed is an operational capability to translate this into benefits for the children most at risk.

**Implementing the guidelines.** According to the Guidelines, EU Heads of Mission, Heads of Mission of civilian operations, EU Military Commanders and the EU Special Representatives are responsible for reporting the effects of conflict on children. These field reports are to provide the basis for an exchange of knowledge and information between the Commission, the Council and member states. Based on the EU reports and other relevant reporting from the UN, the EU can then employ a variety of instruments in relation to third countries, including political dialogue, démarches, multilateral cooperation, and crisis management operations.

However, the Report on the Implementation of the Guidelines notes:

H[eads] o[f] M[ission] did not always take into account the possibility of applying more than one tool ... not all “phases” in the problem cycle were covered by reports. Especially in the first part of the cycle, prevention and emergency relief, less concrete suggestions are available.<sup>16</sup>

A specific recommendation of the research team in this regard is that when Heads of Mission make recommendations for action, they do so using a template for rapid assessment of the desired degree of future engagement in every area of action available to them. A draft template compiled by the research team is provided in Annex 1. The adoption of such a system would encourage a wider range of responses to be considered at the country level, whereas the simple division into prevention, emergency relief/protection, and reintegration and recovery for each of the six priority areas and “other issues” is currently, quite unnecessarily, increasing the likelihood of a piecemeal response.

Whatever improvements are made to reports on children and armed conflict, it is also necessary that such reports and their recommendations should be disseminated in a standard way. The flow of information on child rights and needs should be reaching the appropriate decision-makers and programming staff every time country level reports highlight that more action is required in a particular area.

Only recently have some organizations started to use participatory surveys to learn from children about their reasons for joining armed forces, but such country and context-specific studies remain rare. An initial typology of factors that increase susceptibility to recruitment, which could be monitored through such participatory methods, is offered in the section “Root Causes in Longer-term Programmes” below.

The EU should aim to back such assessments with staff and funding as part of an increase in its engagement in working preventatively on root causes of armed violence. Any initiative to incorporate an added element of monitoring and evaluation may suffer from a lack of resources to do it. The lack of resources for researching root causes of child soldiering will determine the EU’s effectiveness in addressing them. Decision makers must act to minimize the extent to which the design of programmes is based on assumptions rather than evidence, which means investing in and managing better early warning systems (as well as more discerning monitoring and evaluation).<sup>17</sup>

**Mainstreaming at the Commission.** According to Save the Children, there is considerable work to be done before mainstreaming for children can be assessed to be working:

Save the Children regrets that mainstreaming of crosscutting issues has not been achieved in general, and is extremely concerned that this is particularly true for children’s rights. Children’s rights are not only invisible in programming documents and the vast majority of country strategy papers—they are also absent in action programmes, reports, strategy documents and most communications specifying policy relevant to children.<sup>18</sup>

According to a Commission official specialized in children’s rights, there is no shortage of ideas within the Commission on how to mainstream children and armed conflict, but the problem is that very few of these are practicable.<sup>19</sup>

**Country strategy papers.** Children's rights are currently factored into EU policy through Country Strategy Papers (CSPs). It should be encouraged, however, that these strategy papers take into account the complexity of addressing all interrelated concerns for children such as security (SSR/DDR), protection and development issues and would reflect these issues with regard to all categories of children, such as children in armed forces, refugees, accounting fully for the needs of younger and older males and females.

**European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office.** The European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) approaches children and armed conflict issues within its "Policy guidelines regarding children affected by Humanitarian Crises" of 5 July 2004.<sup>20</sup> According to the financing decision of 23 December 2003 entitled "Commission Decision on humanitarian aid for children affected by armed conflict", ECHO was tasked to improve the methodology and tools for the collection and analysis of data, specifically indicators and disaggregated data on the impact of armed conflict on children in 2004.

In immediate crises, ECHO's strong focus on small children has largely excluded or at least not centred on school age and adolescent children.<sup>21</sup> This bias toward small children reflects ECHO's needs-based approach as they display more vulnerability in the areas that ECHO concentrates in, that is food/nutrition, health, water/sanitation, and protection. Protection measures, including the reintegration of child soldiers or protection of girls against sexual violence, target adolescents. Currently, the activities listed under protection do not represent an adequate response to the possibility of re-recruitment of children, particularly as child soldiers tend to be more susceptible to (re-)recruitment than adults. The 2004 ECHO strategy paper does highlight the vulnerability of older children in a humanitarian crisis for recruitment and sexual violence, and recognize the importance of proper and concentrated reintegration, but its programme implementation does not necessarily reflect this.

Problems in linking relief to rehabilitation and development have been noted in an evaluation report on United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) cooperation with ECHO in the context of Burundi and Somalia. The report points to the difficulties posed by limited timeframes for projects as well as low, unpredictable funding for and flexibility within projects. The report also raises problems with Linking of Relief to Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD):

Current LRRD weaknesses did not facilitate ... potential sustainability. ... In parallel to the lack of LRRD, the CSPs do not refer clearly to any specific budget line ([European Development Fund] or other) from which UNICEF could possibly draw further EU funding to sustain its longer term activities.<sup>22</sup>

One of the report's recommendations is thus to create a "Child Protection/Child Rights" budget line to secure longer-term sustainability of activities targeting children. These would also be accessible to actors outside of the EU and accession countries and to other actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs).<sup>23</sup>

### Other budget lines and agencies

The European Development Fund (EDF) primarily focuses on longer-term objects beyond the immediate crisis. Similarly, the "Uprooted People" budget line (B7-302) has a more long-term perspective, seeking to close the relief-development gap and encouraging self-sufficiency. It was originally intended for people in developing countries in Asia and Latin America and targets refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, which might also include demobilized former soldiers and their families. In addition to these core programmes, children in armed

conflict are covered under the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) and the NGO cofinancing line 21 02 03 (ex B7-6000).

The EU can also promote children's rights in its external relations with third countries through its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), using its political leverage as the largest donor in development aid.<sup>24</sup>

The European Parliament has also played an active role in promoting the integration of children's rights into development cooperation, which it has expressed through resolutions, reports, hearings and amendments to the budget.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, the EU is contributing to the regional efforts of the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program in the greater Great Lakes region (MDRP) and many international DDR, SALW and mine action programmes. Children clearly benefit from this work, but their concerns do not drive it. Especially when coordinated with external agencies such as the UN, it is difficult to distinguish the EU's engagement on children's concerns from a wide range of other objectives. A positive effect of the EU Guidelines is that through them the EU attempts to take coherent account of all the ways in which children in or at risk from armed conflict benefit from its actions. The Report on the Implementation of the Guidelines should convene more in-depth evaluations of how children's specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities have been accounted for in the full range of EU instruments.

## Partners

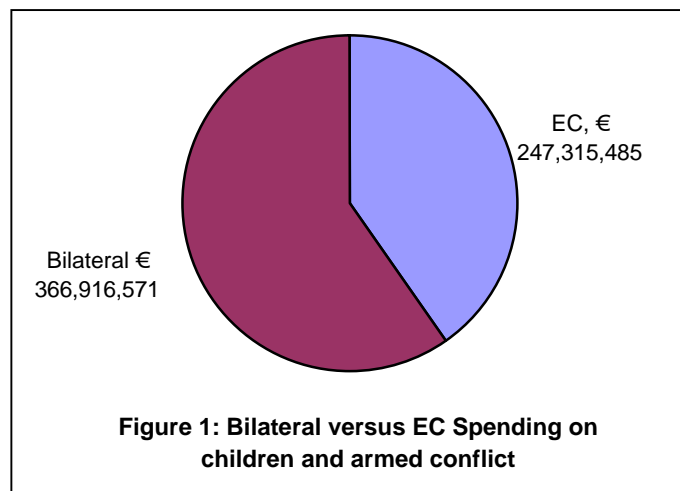
The EU has established a network of partners to cooperate with on children in armed conflict. Foremost among these is UNICEF. A recent evaluation of ECHO-funded UNICEF programmes in Burundi and Somalia indicates a willingness on both sides to deepen this strategic partnership.<sup>26</sup> It has not been possible for research of this scope to gather data from the full range of the EU's external partners on children and armed conflict and SALW, but the interviews that were conducted offer some indications. A complaint raised by UNICEF among other implementing partners is that it is not clear which budgeting lines should be tapped into at the different stages of providing support for children in armed conflict. DDR is thus rightly listed as a concern of ECHO, EDF, the "Uprooted People", RRM, European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights and the NGO cofinancing line. But there is hardly any guidance to ensure clear division of responsibilities within each relevant Directorate General, Service or agency. It would be interesting to discover whether the Commission supplies the Guidelines to consulting firms and NGO partners who are working on related areas, or screens tenders with reference to the Guidelines.

On SALW, one key international implementing agency described the EU's approach to the issue of SALW as "patchwork", and stated that the mechanisms for securing EU funds are confusing and laden with caveats that make the process slow and the outcomes hard to predict. This was not, however, a uniform perception: for example, another interviewee commented that it was not difficult to access funds, and funding decisions were based on a fair appraisal of the merits of the initiative in question.

## EU MEMBER STATES APPROACH

### Bilateral initiatives

Despite what is being done at the EU level on this issue, much of the implementation pointed to in the Report on the Implementation of the Guidelines is carried out by member states.



The preference for bilateral assistance may be justified in terms of capacities of member states in particular issues, an asset whose use is specifically encouraged in the Guidelines. There is a risk, however, that it may also serve to undermine comprehensive programming addressing the full range of issue areas which are required in each country or subregion, as well as pan-EU coordination on the full range of destinations to be covered.

### Linking EU joint action on SALW control to children and armed conflict

It is clear from reviewing the Plan of Action on Children and Armed Conflict, as far as it has been elaborated in the Report on the Implementation of the Guidelines, that while there are many positive ideas on how to proceed with the Guidelines, many further possible areas of EU programming could contribute or are already contributing to the overall response. This is true of SALW, where actions taken under the EU Joint Action on SALW could be more consciously targeted to structural prevention and mitigation of conflict affecting children.

A review of the activities of member states to implement the EU Joint Action on SALW in 2003 gives rise to a number of observations. Firstly, only 11 member states actively supported SALW programming in the period covered, of which only six can be said to have engaged in a substantial way. Secondly, the fourth annual report on the implementation of the Joint Action on SALW<sup>27</sup> shows that, as with action on children and armed conflict, most initiatives on SALW are undertaken bilaterally by member states. These therefore may not be dividing responsibilities in a coordinated way, and are likely to overlook countries or regions because of commitments based on historic ties and spheres of influence. Funds therefore do not necessarily reach areas where problems, at least for children, are most acute. For example, it is recorded that seven member states and the EU itself have funded weapons destruction in Albania in recent years. SALW problems in South-Eastern Europe are indeed worthy of funding. However, more member states should be engaging in SALW problems in a way that would more clearly improve human security and the condition of children in countries such as Burma, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Sudan, which

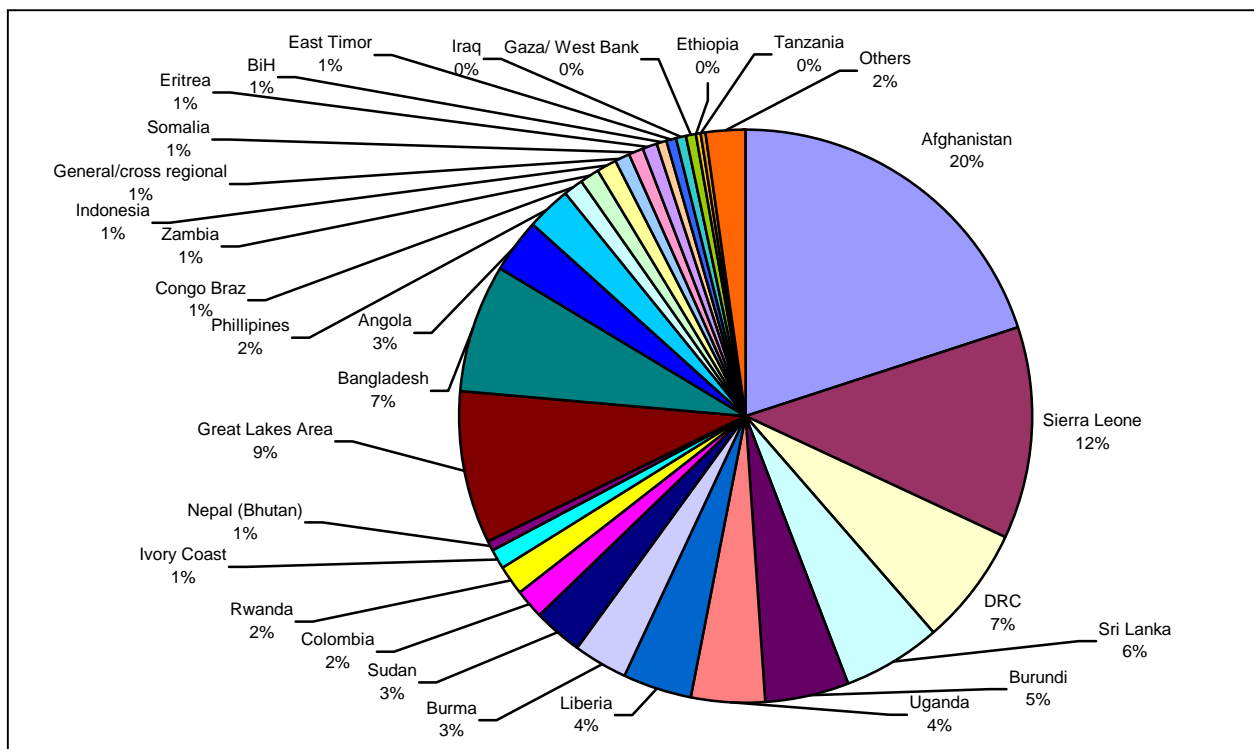
were not mentioned as beneficiaries of activities to implement the EU Joint Action on SALW in 2003.

## OVERVIEW OF THE EU RESPONSE

### Thematic and geographic initiatives

As can be seen in Figure 2, two-thirds of the funding for projects listed as contributing to the Implementation of the Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict was spent directly in the 13 countries focused on by the Guidelines (these are the countries clockwise as far as Nepal). Afghanistan attracted a fifth of the total funding, largely because of a bilateral donation from Sweden to a UNICEF project focusing solely on education for girls. The fact that a fifth of all assistance on children and armed conflict is offered bilaterally to a single project covering one thematic area for one gender again raises questions about member state coordination, and their potential for covering the full range of children and armed conflict issues comprehensively through bilateral work.

Figure 2. Distribution of funding on children and armed conflict to beneficiary countries<sup>28</sup>

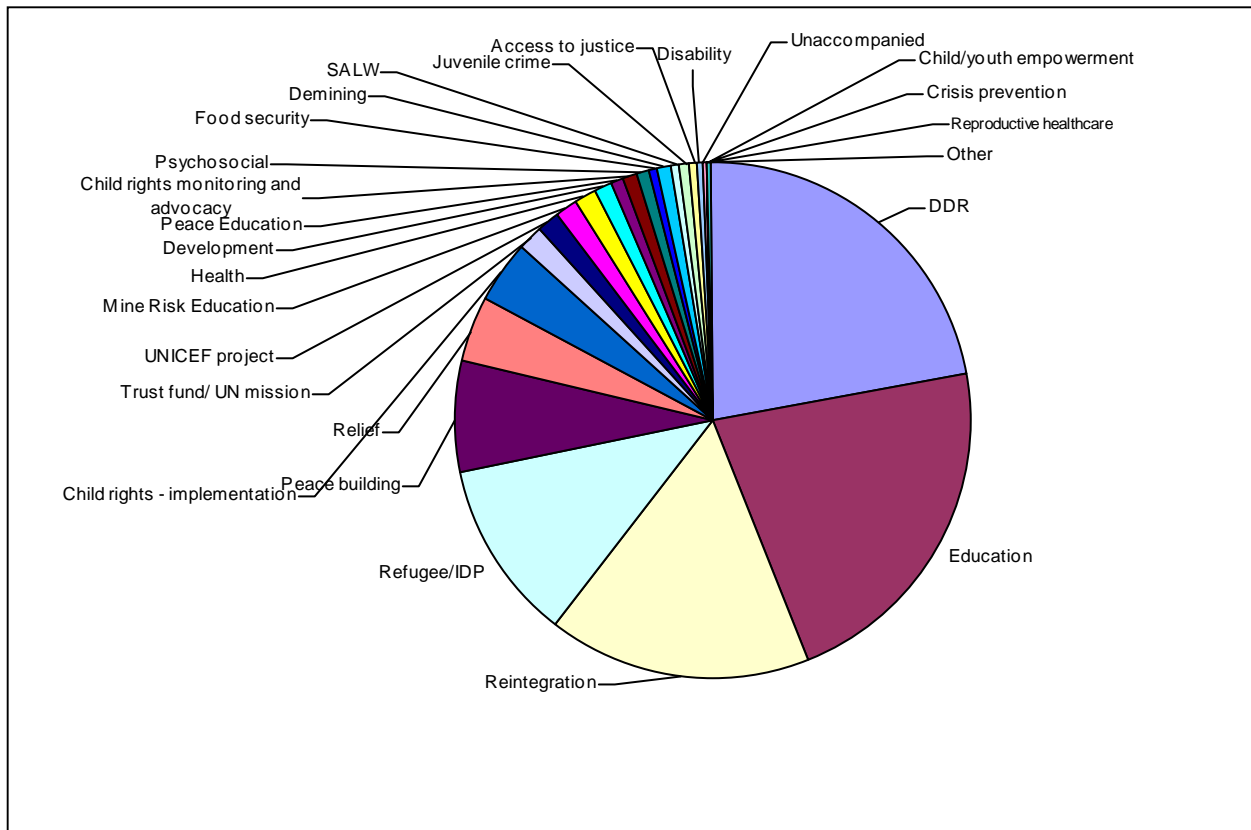


In terms of the current spread of funding by thematic issue, it can be seen in Figure 3 below that strong attention is being paid to the DDR, education and reintegration sectors, which account for two-thirds of current funding on children and armed conflict. This is certainly encouraging, but further research should be conducted on work done to date, to determine:

- the degree to which children are the focus of many projects cited as benefiting children associated with fighting forces;
- the projects that offer the most cost effective sustainable contribution for children;

- the issue and geographic areas being missed under the current preference for bilateral action by member states; and
- how the needs of children can be better mainstreamed and addressed in relevant policy areas

Figure 3. Distribution of funding on children and armed conflict by thematic activity



It is clear from the Figure 3, which is based on the EU's own list of its activities in Annex III of the Report on the Implementation of the Guidelines, that in certain issue areas the list of activities funded does not reflect the full range of the EU's involvement in certain issues. It is stated that activities conducted by ECHO are not included, which is a further demonstration of the problems faced in trying to coordinate and analyse the opportunities for building a more comprehensive approach.

Although many of the categories under which activities have been placed in reality overlap significantly, Figure 3 nevertheless broadly illustrates how little emphasis is currently placed on preventive measures. If the categories of peace-building, development, peace education, SALW, access to justice, juvenile crime, crisis prevention, child/youth empowerment and child rights monitoring, advocacy and implementation are aggregated as collectively representing preventative action, they account for just 15% of total expenditure on children and armed conflict. The movement to a less reactive approach would require intensified efforts in these areas of programming.

## A rights-based approach?

The EU's commitment to children in armed conflict can be explained by its engagement for human rights and democracy. Through the UNCRC, children were recognized internationally as "social actors" with their own set of rights separate from their families.<sup>29</sup> Endorsing the UNCRC, its Optional Protocol, and other human rights instruments, the EU Guidelines establish children's rights as a priority in EU policy, particularly in relation to human rights. By endorsing and promoting a rights-based approach, the EU has pledged to fulfil children's basic human needs<sup>30</sup>

Rights-based policies and programmes should ultimately result in a people-empowering and inclusive approach as children are enabled to voice their interests and needs and—with the assistance of their government, their community and their family—to bring about essential changes in their environment. Considering that children and youth are often key agents within the conflict cycle and carriers of social violence, it is vital that the EU respond by addressing them, in deed as in word, as agents as well as victims. Despite its recognition of children as social actors, many EU policies and programmes reflect a needs-based approach,<sup>31</sup> which raises concerns about the sidelining of older children and adolescents. That is to say that a "youth-centred perspective" on security issues should have a more central place in the EU approach. Such a perspective would explore the relationship between the demand and supply for child soldiers and the demand and supply of small arms. Youth's vulnerability to recruitment is a factor in the demand for small arms. As pointed out in the study by Angela McIntyre and Taya Weiss, the quickness among young people to resort to violent behaviour is partly a reaction to the state's neglect for their concerns, foremost in education. In view of the role of youth in small arms trade and the continuation of war, McIntyre and Weiss promote the creation of "safe spaces" for youth, meaning an increase of alternatives in employment and "diversion" to what the military has to offer.<sup>32</sup>

The relative lack of programming in these areas can partly be explained by the over-emphasis of children's roles as victims in armed conflict, thus hiding their (positive and negative) agency in their society. The vital role of youth organizations has not yet been realized.<sup>33</sup> Although some EU-funded programmes aim at creating child-friendly spaces, they cannot substitute for youth organizations that correspond to the specific needs and capacities of older children and adolescents.<sup>34</sup> Child and youth radio programming, for instance, have turned out to have a positive impact on society's perceptions of youth. Some of these youth organizations can be instructed on how to do their own assessment of needs and capacities of children and youth in their communities or countries.<sup>35</sup>

In conflict-prone areas, sports, art, child/youth radio programmes or theatre can be important ways of showing children and young people a life beyond violence, bringing them into contact with children of various backgrounds (child soldiers with other children, children of different ethnic or religious backgrounds, and so on) and helping them recuperate from past experiences and traumas. Many NGOs have gathered experience in this area that could be integrated into EU funding priorities.<sup>36</sup>

Given that unemployment and underemployment is one of the root causes of children's involvement in armed forces and groups, vocational and skills training can increase the resilience of children and youth toward recruitment efforts. There is not enough emphasis on these economic issues in relation to children.

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## CHILDREN'S CONCERNS WITHIN THEMATIC ISSUES

### YOUTH IN DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION

Armed children and youth are widely regarded as the most problematic group of combatants to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate and are treated as the group providing the highest security risks. DDR programmes have increasingly been confronted by contexts where the majority of former combatants are young people. All too often, these programmes address former soldiers as a group and fail to target the different subsets of challenges that are specific and vary according to the life-stage of the targeted population. As young people constitute the majority of combatants in most DDR efforts, youth should not be singled out as a special group. Rather, DDR should become youth-focused.

DDR programmes should deal with youth holistically: as victims, as potential spoilers, but most importantly, as potential economic and social actors. Young women and men can make important contributions to the reconstruction and recovery of a war-torn country. They are often at the forefront of social movements, calling for and promoting a more equitable and peaceful society.<sup>37</sup> Although they have considerable potential, young people also suffer high economic and social vulnerability. The sense of alienation and marginalization of jobless frustrated young people results, in many pre- and post-conflict contexts, in violent behaviour, juvenile delinquency and in their recruitment into armed gangs, groups or forces. If not properly addressed, these behaviours can jeopardize a relatively frail state of peace. Youth must be integrated into the reconstruction, peace and long-term development processes of post-conflict societies.

A peace agreement followed by a DDR process is not sufficient to assure a durable peace if the socio-economic situation is not improved, and youth are unable to find their place in society. In the peace process, the voices of the young are normally neglected, and their needs are rarely taken into account in DDR and reconstruction work. As a result, the post-conflict period tends to remain highly unsatisfactory for these young people, pushing many of them into criminality or prostitution and all of them into insecurity. Young people are particularly vulnerable in this context: they are perpetrators and victims in conflict at the same time. Their involvement can be likened to a *marché de dupes*, with them being manipulated and used for the benefit of power claims and ambitions (political and economic) of a minority.<sup>38</sup>

The challenge to make DDR efforts respond to the needs and aspirations of youth is indeed enormous. It is important that youngsters find a meaningful role in the post-conflict period that is equivalent in terms of responsibility and status to the role they played during conflict.

The EU will need to address key areas of concern to youth in DDR and should invest time and resources to make DDR more appropriate for youth—ensuring that it taps in to their aspirations and potential.

#### When to intervene—good intentions are not enough

The imperative to stop the participation of children in armed (conflict) groups is clear from a legal and moral perspective. However, it is important that any attempt to demobilize children is conducted in an environment of security and protection, when socio-economic conditions appropriate to children are in place. If children are demobilized while hostilities are continuing or before a peace agreement has been agreed, there is a clear danger that they will be left with no sufficient protection from violence, will be prime targets for re-recruitment by any group willing to

supplement its capacity with trained combatants, or will be forced into situations which are just as unacceptable as their association with armed groups (such as prostitution or gang activities). If physical protection and reintegration is not on offer, then resources spent on demobilization are likely to be wasted as children find themselves reintroduced into the same cycle that led to their initial recruitment.<sup>39</sup>

Peacekeeping operations can therefore add a crucial element of forceful protection: demobilization camps are typically hotbeds of violent and criminal activity, while improvements can be derived through greater attention to common-sense protective measures for children, such as securing the pathways leading away from camps where cash payments are distributed. Therefore it is crucial that both civilian and military, emergency response and long-term development aspects of the EU response are in tune with one another, SALW, ERW and security sector reform programming included.

During peace negotiations, the parties of the conflict rarely want to admit to their use of child soldiers, fearing legal and political repercussions. Child soldiers are thus sometimes not explicitly mentioned in peace agreements. The result of this political calculus may be that no resources are specifically allocated to DDR for child soldiers.

### From emergency to development

DDR has to address concerns related to children through both emergency and development assistance, since it encompasses both. Furthermore, it has to bridge the gap between short-term emergency response and long-term development, a well-known phenomenon in post-conflict settings.

Long-term development objectives should be reflected in the short-term emergency approach. Capacity-building of national structures is a key element for ensuring sustainability, as is the affordability for the target society in the long term of interventions made according to short-term considerations. Coordinating agencies should promote a social dialogue between government, the security sector and civil society, and international humanitarian and development actors.

A major challenge is to provide reintegration assistance to ex-combatants immediately and ensure that it will also have a permanent positive impact on the society. Funds for DDR programming should also be used to address some of the conflict's root causes. Many young people are driven by despair and revenge when they join armed groups; some also join to contribute to the small incomes of their family or to protect them. Reintegration programmes should consider the reasons why young people join armed forces in the first place, to prevent their re-recruitment. Furthermore, the capacities should be built up of actors assisting ex-combatants now and in the future. For example, if the ministries responsible for employment and youth are strengthened under the DDR programme, they will be able to provide services to young job-seekers in the future.<sup>40</sup>

On 31 March 2005, Human Rights Watch reported that:

Ivorian Army officers and Liberian ex-commanders have intensified their recruitment efforts ... interviewees have said they were offered financial compensation for going to fight in Côte d'Ivoire. Others were offered clothing, jobs and lured through the opportunity of paying themselves through looting. Most of the Liberians interviewed had disarmed in Liberia last year and subsequently signed up for education and skills training programs being

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administered by the UN backed [DDRRR] program. But due to severe funding shortfalls in this program only a few education and skills-training programs have opened up [near] the Ivorian border. All combatants interviewed said they did not understand why the programs and schools had yet to open and cited their frustration as having contributed to their decision to join the Ivorian militia.<sup>41</sup>

The continuity of disarmament and demobilization with the process of integration is vital not just as a long-term development commitment, but as an essential part of any decisive end to conflict and armed violence as mentioned above. This may present problems to the EU: at the Commission level responsibility is allocated for demobilization and reintegration to different units within EuropeAid. At the country level, the Head of Mission for Liberia reported last year that in a planned DDRRR (disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement) the “RR” was late and lacked funding. If the EU wishes to prevent situations such as that currently unravelling in Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia in the future, it needs to take action when the warning signs are clear, and commit funding for all phases in continuous and comprehensive initiatives which proceed smoothly from emergency relief to economic development through a focus on human security.

### Border management

Other considerations in building a framework for development include initiatives to tackle the security of boundaries and borders. A UN Secretary-General Report on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa noted transborder issues as related to the movement of mercenaries, child soldiers and small arms, and wider issues such as youth unemployment and social exclusion. Among a range of other suggestions, including collective action to control SALW, it suggested at the field level the use of joint security patrols, common border management in sensitive areas, and human rights monitoring where appropriate.<sup>42</sup>

### Security sector reform

It is also important that as well as directly offering protection and security through military and police missions, security sector reform (SSR) receives due attention. In order for post-conflict societies to manage their security needs and access to justice, it is necessary for funds and resources to be devoted earlier to reform and build capacity of the security sector in societies before and after conflict.

However, the current trend to regard DDR mainly as a security concern, closely linked to SSR, is that children receive less attention as they are less considered as a security threat. Women and children associated with fighting forces are then not regarded as “dangerous elements” with the potential to destabilize the security situation, and child-focused agencies such as UNICEF have difficulties finding sufficient funding to cater for the demobilized children.

## ROOT CAUSES OF CHILD PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT

### Joining armed forces

There is little analysis and guidance for follow-up on the root causes of children’s participation in armed conflict. The reason for this might be that the UNCRC, the most important reference of the EU Guidelines, and its Optional Protocol do not address some of the root causes for the recruitment of children: economic or political motives for participating in armed violence are ignored.

While some children are forced to join armed forces through abductions or threats of force, most children and youth “choose” to arm themselves. For many, this just constitutes a “reasonable adaptive strategy or practical protection mechanism in situations of extreme danger or deprivation”.<sup>43</sup> If they are surrounded by war, or grew up in a family where gun-possession was regarded as necessary or even provided status, that increases the chances of young people engaging in armed violence or becoming associated with armed forces. Poverty, need for protection, anger and sentiments of revenge are other factors that make young people choose to arm themselves. Understanding the root-causes of youth participation in violence is needed before one can start addressing them.<sup>44</sup> An enquiry into these conditions could also be conducted in a society where outbreaks of armed violence are probable. A recent study of young soldiers’ perception of their own reasons for enlisting with armed groups or forces in locations around the world revealed the particular risk factors listed in the table below. One condition frequently led to the presence of another, and where several of the conditions were combined, vulnerability to recruitment was particularly high. Tackling these factors over the long term would represent a major contribution to the prevention of armed violence in the society in question, and child participation in it.

### Root causes in longer-term programmes

For children and youth who have been demobilized, if the motivations for the previous turn to armed violence are mapped at the country level, it should then be possible to address these environmental factors and reduce the chances of child participation in armed conflict in the long term.

Table 1. Typical factors contributing to decision to enlist among “voluntary” child combatants<sup>45</sup>

Typical Contributing Factors		Possible Prevention Initiatives	
PRESENCE OF CONFLICT	Family	Abuse (particularly among girls)	Social protection
		Relocation	Conflict prevention, minority rights, protection for IDPs, refugees
		Death of relative(s)	Conflict prevention, security sector reform, SALW control
		Insecurity of relative(s)	
		Relative(s) enlisted	Provide alternatives: life skills training, alternative family placement, foster care, support to community and team-based activities (for example sports)
		Primary family is armed group	
		Poverty	Economic development, poverty relief, micro-credits to families
		Ill-health	Provision for healthcare and dependents
		No family	Social protection
	Education	No access	Provide/demand access to education, free school meals/water, child care in schools
		Segregated	Demand end to segregation
		Incitement to extremism	Offer non-partisan education
		Disinterest	Skills training, recreation

Typical Contributing Factors		Possible Prevention Initiatives	
	Abuse	Social protection	
	Extreme behaviour/expulsion	Projects targeting delinquency	
	Politics/ Ideology	Religious hatred (less in girls)	Inter-communal/-confessional exchanges, confidence building, non-violent communication, objective media (for youth, possibly also run by youth)
		Ethnic hatred (less in girls)	
		Nationalist	
		Grievance	Include young people's concerns in peace settlements, create non-violent channels for addressing grievances, support responsible reporting (with youth involvement)
	Personal Need	Independence	Social protection, skills training, support to independent youth initiatives
		Power	Support youth advocacy groups
		Excitement	Sports, recreational activities
		Attraction to guns, soldiers, fighting	SALW Awareness
	Culture/ Tradition	Of fighting	Non-violent communication, encourage alternative (male) identity
		Of gun ownership	SALW control and awareness
		Partisan media	Support to independent media, closure of hate media
		Violence in media	Campaign with parents not to expose youth to violence
	Insecurity	To save self	Create safe zones for civilians
		To save relative(s)	
		To avenge self or relative(s)	Access to justice, support grass-roots justice, demand adherence to and prosecute violations of international humanitarian law
		Violent environment	Security sector reform, including community-based policing, participatory Safer Community initiatives
	Economic	Hunger	Create conditions of food security, provide relief
		Need for money	Economic development, research aspirations, job creation through local businesses/ reconstruction projects/microfinance, training, apprenticeships
Need for work			
Active recruitment		Penalties for those who are actively recruiting and disseminating information	

The suggestions in the right-hand column on how to address the factors listed in this table are by no means an exhaustive list of proven solutions, but it would be desirable if EU projects contributed to the existence of such a list by rigorously testing approaches to these significant and largely overlooked problems.

In the long term after conflict, and even in societies where children and youth have not been engaged in armed violence, young people are likely to perpetrate and bear the brunt of a large proportion of firearms injuries.<sup>46</sup> Statistically, these young people are also likely to be male.<sup>47</sup> Research needs to be conducted on how to instil a non-violent masculinity from a young age in post-conflict societies where weapons and cultures of violence are part of a child's upbringing. Whatever solutions are on offer to males, reintegration needs of girls should not be overlooked. The needs of girls are discussed in more detail in a distinct section on "Gender" below.

There are very serious long-term mental and physical healthcare problems faced by children and young people in a post-conflict environment. One of these is that the needs of those injured by conflict are long term. Young amputees often have additional complications because they have not finished growing, and prosthetic limbs for them may need to be regularly replaced. Another relates to trauma counselling, which is often limited to the short term under the scope of current reintegration programmes. The psychological scars from witnessing, participating in or being victims of rape, torture, mutilation and other forms of cruelty or violence demand the provision of longer-term support (using techniques and possibly rituals that are appropriate to local cultures). Similarly, drug problems, as faced by many former combatants, may require rehabilitation over months and years, rather than on the timescale often envisaged in current reintegration programming.

Care should be taken in any case that the supposed family claiming a child from a reintegration programme is not in fact a commander trying to access cash paid to demobilized children while at the same time re-recruiting the child.<sup>48</sup> Older children or adolescents are regularly neglected in DDR programming. Since everybody under 18 years is regarded as a child soldier and treated as a child, their extended roles and responsibilities during conflict are rarely considered. The period of adolescence and youth is an extremely sensitive and dynamic phase in which people develop their personalities, worldviews and careers. Specific programmes for this age group would help them find their roles as productive members of society.<sup>49</sup>

## SALW PROGRAMMING, CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### SALW awareness in schools

In terms of SALW programming directly targeting children, children in societies recovering from conflict could benefit over the longer term from projects that would offer children/young people education about the dangers posed by weapons and the role they play in society.<sup>50</sup> For younger children, who are much more likely to discover and play with weapons than their caregivers tend to expect, SALW awareness should teach the dangers of weapons and get children to practice how to respond. For older children, discussion of weapons is a good way to discuss the impacts of criminal/violent behaviours, and can play a part in building a sense of civic responsibility within a less violent society. Projects to do this have been piloted to complement public weapons collection, community-based policing initiatives, citizenship classes and alongside HIV/AIDS, drugs, prostitution and mine risk education.

Behaviour change is very difficult to achieve in any target group. Future projects to change child behaviours should take on board the following caveats:

- Attempts to get children to ensure their own safety around weapons will probably fail unless they are reinforced in the home and the community. Initiatives to keep children and weapons apart through community momentum may be much more likely to succeed.

- If projects to educate on the risks of weapons are backed by the EU in future, they should include monitoring and evaluation against baselines, which would enable the detection of changes in behaviour and casualty rates.
- All awareness projects should be based on knowledge of the local context and on a range of interactive activities, which allow children to learn.
- Direct discussion of the dangers of weapons may evoke painful memories of conflict, so should be approached with care. Non-violent communication may be a better way to address the issue of weapons indirectly.
- Campaign materials depicting carrying of weapons by children may be counterproductive or even dangerous. The criticism has been made that soldiers carrying weapons have conducted risk education classes on weapons in schools conducted by EU forces in Bosnia. More care should be taken not to offer mixed signals in this and other ways.

### Further youth-related aspects of SALW control programming

Any SALW control initiative should take into account the possession levels, perceptions and behaviours of young people in relation to weapons as part of any country-level analysis or “survey” of the SALW problem.<sup>51</sup> If, as is likely, young people or subgroups of them are detected to be a key target group in terms of reduction of weapons possession levels, violence or crime, awareness-raising to complement collection or registration of weapons should be specifically tailored to their needs. Such SALW awareness-raising should be conducted in line with principles of communication well accepted in other fields (such as health communication or mine risk education). Awareness projects should first take care to analyse their target audience at the local level, and select the best communication channels and key communicators for influencing it.<sup>52</sup>

## GENDER

### Gender in current programming

The human rights framework ensures that the rights of all children, both girls and boys, are protected. The EU has also introduced gender mainstreaming into all its programmes. In its child programming in Sierra Leone, ECHO provided special assistance, through its partner organization COOPI, an Italian NGO, to young girls and mothers who had been the victims of rape. Particularly girls had been the victims of mass rape and sexual exploitation, resulting in severe medical and social consequences. “Rebel babies” had regularly been the victims of abuse by their mothers, who rejected them.<sup>53</sup>

Beyond psychosocial care for young women such as these, girls also require specific assistance to support them in achieving educational and career goals. While the achievement of primary education for girls is a special concern of the EU and its partner organizations in Bangladesh, for example, there is relatively little done to assist older girls and female youth. In fact, despite the unequivocal provision of the UNCRC concerning the definition of a child, girls who have become mothers or who have married at a young age are often excluded from child programmes and treated as adults.

A prerequisite for devising gender-sensitive child programming is, however, that a gender assessment also precedes child programming. Assessment of gender concerns beyond the area of sexual and gender based violence should therefore be examined routinely in Head of Mission reports, and gender questions should be fully examined before projects on children and armed conflict are implemented. If the specific needs of boy and girl young children and youth before,

during and following conflict are neglected, programming is prone to deny these children their basic rights.

### Special considerations on gender

So far, child and youth programming tends to assume a homogeneous image of children despite gender and age differences. DDR programmes must take into account the distinct needs of boy and girl children and youth, which result from their gender-related roles and experiences before, during and after conflict. In most societies, and particularly in wartime, there is a more or less consciously exerted pressure on boys to play the role of warrior or defender within the cycle of violence.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, girl combatants run contrary to common notions of femininity that emphasize women's peaceful and caring roles. While girl combatants have been equals as comrades in armed groups, many occupational paths are denied to them as girls during peace times, which consigns them to a narrow range of industries and occupations that are generally lower skilled and lower paid.<sup>55</sup>

Specific psychosocial programming for boy and girl children and youth will be necessary as violent armed conflict tends to aggravate sexual abuse. Gender-based violence is all too often used as a weapon. Both boys and girls are targeted but girls carry the additional burden of undesirable pregnancies and are more often sexually abused. In order to protect themselves from violence, some girls decide to take up arms as having a gun might actually reduce their vulnerability. Domestic violence is one of the main reasons for many young girls for joining up. Conflict then actually offers an opportunity for girls to escape their abusive situation, such as in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where domestic violence is a key reason for young girls to register as combatants. Many boys also want to protect the female members of their family from sexual abuse.<sup>56</sup>

For disarming and demobilizing girls, it is crucial not to restrict programmes to those girls who can hand in weapons: those who have gone through the same kind of experiences in supporting roles, have self-demobilized, or were disarmed by their superiors must also be included. In some cases, commanders have been asked to list combatants but have frequently excluded girls and women whom they consider dependents of male combatants.<sup>57</sup> In other cases such as Liberia, commanders ordered their girls to leave their weapons behind in the bush in order not to be seen as combatants publicly.<sup>58</sup>

Many girls also seem to have difficulties in exercising their right to demobilize and taking the assistance associated with the process. Earlier programmes did not take women's special needs into account. These days the provisions are made but many women combatants do not appear in great numbers at the assembly points for demobilization. This inability or unwillingness to take advantage of assistance at encampment sites should be addressed. Some women do not want to be confronted with their past as combatants, others fear social exclusion or are kept from the demobilization camps by male soldiers or commanders.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, if reintegration programmes depend on certification of ex-combatants, many girls who have self-demobilized may be unfairly excluded from reintegration assistance, while others may be overlooked because of their multiple roles in armed forces, as fighters, helpers, cooks, health workers, porters, and providers of sexual services, often under duress. Many of them have married a commander or soldier. Programmes should actively identify and assist these and the large number of self-demobilized girls to reintegrate into society. They should also actively seek to understand the reluctance of girls to go through official DDR processes.<sup>60</sup>

Girls who actively participated in conflicts are confronted with additional difficulties during their reintegration process, based on the perception in many conservative and patriarchal societies that military activities are “unsuitable” for women.<sup>61</sup> As a result, many women face rejection upon their return from conflicts, and possible exclusion from traditional community-based social-support systems. Discrimination against them as job-seekers or first-time entrepreneurs is also an issue, and some opt to settle in areas where their personal history is not known. Training offered to women should not relegate them to traditional female roles if there is something else that they would aspire to be.

Many girl combatants also have babies, which may obstruct their social acceptance and economic integration. The additional health and psychological problems associated with forced sexual activity, childbirth and abortion also need to be considered.<sup>62</sup> The lack of employment opportunities for women has contributed to the increasing feminization of poverty in many developing countries. Young women face even greater discrimination than adult women in the labour market as it is believed that they will soon get married and leave their employment or become less productive.<sup>63</sup>

Just as youth organizations are often a positive vehicle for developing positive initiatives, such as anti-weapons or anti-violence campaigns, so women’s organizations around the world have proved themselves to be a powerful lobbying force for campaigning against the prevalence of guns and the threats which are linked to their prevalence, both of these can make ideal implementing partners in conducting SALW Awareness in schools in target communities.

## CONCLUSION

Norms and commitments are already in place for acting on the issue of children in armed conflict, what is now needed is an operational capability to translate this into benefits for the children most at risk. Problems affecting children in armed conflict can easily be placed together conceptually, but they require a coherent response across a staggering range of policy areas and EU institutions. They also require efficient, user-friendly cooperation with external partners and third countries.

The following recommendations emerge from the discussion in sections I and II.

### GENERAL

1. The creation of an EU Special Envoy on Children and Armed Conflict would help ensure increased internal coordination. It would also offer civil society actors, external partners and member states a clear focal point to engage with, which could offer important benefits in terms of dialogue and coordination.
2. The issue could also be given further emphasis by the creation of a budget line to fund child-focused projects that include small arms related matters.
3. Subsequent Reports on the Implementation of the Guidelines should convene more in-depth evaluations of how children’s specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities have been accounted for in the full range of EU instruments. Further research should be conducted on work done to date, to determine:
  - the degree to which children are the focus of many projects cited in the report on the implementation of the guidelines;

- the projects that offer the most cost-effective sustainable contribution to the well being of children; and
  - the issue and geographic areas being missed under the current preference for bilateral action by member states.
4. Excluding the relief work of ECHO, preventive action currently accounts for just 15% of total expenditure on children and armed conflict. This includes activities listed by the EU report on the Implementation of the Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict in the areas of peace building, peace-education, SALW, access to justice, juvenile crime, crisis prevention, development, child rights monitoring, advocacy and implementation and child/youth empowerment. A less reactive approach should be adopted with intensified efforts in these areas of programming.
  5. Only recently have some organizations started to use participatory surveys to learn from children about their reasons for joining armed forces, but such country and context-specific studies remain rare. The EU should aim to back such assessments with staff and funding as part of an increase in its engagement in working preventatively on root causes of armed violence. Table 1 provides a list of typical factors contributing to the decision to enlist among “voluntary” child combatants, and programmes to prevent these factors. The EU should rigorously test preventative solutions to these significant and largely overlooked problems.
  6. The dichotomy between children as victims and children as social actors remains problematic within the EU’s approach. Rights-based policies and programmes should ultimately result in a people-empowering and inclusive approach as children are enabled to voice their interests and needs and—with the assistance of their government, their community and their family—to bring about essential changes in their environment. Considering that children and youth are often key agents within the conflict cycle and carriers of social violence, it is vital that the EU address them, in deed as in word, as agents as well as victims. So far, a “youth-centred perspective” on security issues is missing in the EU approach.
  7. Given their role in creating future stability, the concerns of youth should be included and addressed within peace processes.
  8. The vital role of youth organizations has not yet been realized. Such youth organizations can stimulate social dialogue among young people, civil society, and political organizations and actors. Young people can become familiar with important elements of democratic processes and gain faith in their ability to bring about justice and peace.
  9. In conflict-prone areas, sports, art, child/youth radio programmes or theatre are largely forgotten, but can be important ways of showing child and youth a life beyond violence, bringing them into contact with children of various backgrounds (child soldiers with other children, children of different ethnic or religious backgrounds, and so forth) and helping them recuperate from past experiences and traumas. Many NGOs have gathered experience in this area that could be integrated into EU programming.
  10. Vocational and skills training and assistance for micro-business start-up should be further encouraged, given that unemployment and underemployment is one of the root causes of children’s involvement in armed forces and groups. These programmes can also increase the resilience of children and youth toward recruitment efforts.

## THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

11. Much more effort needs to be put into effective mainstreaming, including training officials so that they have the knowledge and skills to take active responsibility for areas related to children and armed conflict under their responsibility.

## ECHO

12. ECHO's project programming should reflect the need to address the susceptibility to re-recruitment, particularly of older children.
13. In evaluating cooperation with the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office, UNICEF has suggested a "Child Protection/Child Rights" budget line to secure longer-term support of activities for children in armed conflict. These would also be accessible to actors outside the EU and Accession Countries and to other actors such as NGOs.

## GENDER

14. Reintegration needs of girls should not be overlooked. It is known that fewer girls demobilize than were fighting. It is crucial not to restrict programmes to those girls who can hand in weapons: those who have gone through the same kind of experiences in supporting roles, have self-demobilized, or were disarmed by their superiors must also be included. The motives of girls and boys in becoming child soldiers differ in certain key respects, which would necessitate adaptations in the programming response.

## MONITORING AND REPORTING

15. When Heads of Mission make recommendations for action, they should do so using a template for rapid assessment of the desired degree of future engagement in every area of action available to them.
16. Reports from Heads of Mission should monitor, give early warning of and offer recommendations to address the root causes of child participation in hostilities.
17. Children's networks or child monitoring units should be more actively encouraged.
18. It should be made easier for civil society groups who are monitoring on children's rights to raise their concerns with appropriate officials in a timely way, by:
  - allocating responsibility for responding to child's rights concerns in all areas of programming more clearly, possibly including the appointment of a more senior figurehead to coordinate the approach; and
  - providing a guide to the institutions and instruments of the EU working on the issue.

## DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION

19. A major challenge is to provide reintegration assistance to ex-combatants immediately, before they are enticed into another conflict, gangs or a livelihood in crime. If the ministries responsible for employment and youth are strengthened they will be able to provide services to young job-seekers in the future.
20. The continuity of disarmament and demobilization with the process of integration is vital not just as a long-term development commitment, but as an essential part of any decisive end to conflict and armed violence as mentioned above. Allocation of responsibility to

distinct units of the EC should not lead to incoherent, mistimed and uncoordinated approaches, which can have very negative consequences.

21. The EU will need to address key areas of concern to youth in DDR and should invest time and resources to make DDR more appropriate for youth—ensuring that it taps in to their aspirations and potential.
22. DDR programmes should analyse and address the reasons why young people join armed forces, making resources and personnel available for doing so well before DDR actually begins. Understanding young people’s fears and worries can inform the type of reintegration assistance that would make them feel secure. In doing so, it is, of course, equally important to give opportunities to those who, faced with similar circumstances, chose not to join armed forces.

### LINKING SALW TO CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

23. Any SALW control initiative should take into account the possession levels, perceptions and behaviours of young people in relation to weapons as part of any country-level analysis or “survey” of the SALW problem. If, as is likely, young people or subgroups of them are detected to be a key target group in terms of reduction of weapons possession levels, violence or crime, awareness raising to complement collection or registration of weapons should be specifically tailored to their needs. Such SALW awareness-raising should be conducted in line with principles of communication well accepted in other fields (such as health communication or mine risk education).

### ARMS EXPORT CONTROLS

24. The EU should create a central, continually updated warning mechanism for advising on the suitability of particular destinations and end-users. The mechanism would actively gather evidence on internal repression, tension and conflict risk including the abuse of child rights and the use of child soldiers, and ensure that it can be fed into the export control decision-making mechanism of all EU countries. As part and parcel of this, the EU should ensure that information on risks to children and abuses of child rights (for instance arising from Head of Missions’ reports) promptly reaches export control agencies to help them to fulfil their commitments to human rights and humanitarian law.

## ANNEX 1

Template of possible action to be recommended in Head of Mission reports

ISSUE		INVOLVEMENT			COMMENT
		CURRENT (1-5)	FUTURE (+/-)	CAPACITY (1-5)	
Direct					
Registration of birth and issuing of ID					
Monitoring/ early warning on child rights abuses					
Conflict resolution					
Peacekeeping					
Collection of weapons					
Demobilization of combatants					
Reintegration of children associated with armed forces	Education				
	Training				
	Healthcare physical				
	Healthcare mental				
	Job search				
	Employment				
	Cultural activities				
	Action to prevent commanders re-recruiting				
	Social protection				
	Support for the family				
Reuniting families					
Support initiatives by young people					
Support initiatives by non-violent groups					
Awareness	Mine Risk/ ERW				
	Other SALW risk				
	Recruitment				
	HIV/AIDS				
	Child rights				
	Anti-violence				
	Anti-weapons				
Confidence in rule of law					
Humanitarian assistance	Food				
	Water				

ISSUE		INVOLVEMENT			
		CURRENT (1-5)	FUTURE (+/-)	CAPACITY (1-5)	COMMENT
	Shelter				
	Protection from armed violence in refugee camps				
Rule of law					
Objective broadcasting/ media support					
Other (specify).....					
Other (specify) .....					
<b>Indirect</b>					
Clearance of ERW and landmines					
Arms transfer controls within EU					
Stockpile security within EU					
International Law	Restrictions on financial activity of those associated with violation of child rights in armed conflict				
	Restrictions on movement of those associated with violation of child rights in armed conflict				
	Influence on states which condone/ fail to punish abuse of child rights in conflict				
	Sanctions against states which condone/ fail to punish abuse of child rights in conflict				
	Prosecution of violators of child rights within EU				
	Support to international criminal prosecution of violation of child rights in armed conflict				
	Strengthening law relevant to the rights of children in armed conflict				

ISSUE		INVOLVEMENT			
		CURRENT (1-5)	FUTURE (+/-)	CAPACITY (1-5)	COMMENT
	Training EU peacekeepers in child rights in conflict				
	Training external security forces in child rights in conflict				
Grassroots justice					
Advocating arms control outside EU	National commissions				
	Stockpile management				
	Destruction				
	Export Controls				
	Brokering				
	Border Controls				
	Public Collection				
	Awareness				
	Legislative reform				
Funding arms control outside EU	National commissions				
	Stockpile management				
	Destruction				
	Export Controls				
	Brokering				
	Border Controls				
	Public Collection				
	Awareness				
	Legislative reform				
Development	Access to trade				
	Debt cancellation				
	Poverty reduction				
	Other				
Other (specify).....					
Other (specify).....					

## Notes

- 1 Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey Yearbook 2004: Rights at Risk*, 2004, pp. 174–175.
- 2 World Health Organization, *Small Arms and Global Health*, 2001, p. 7: “Youth violence, particularly among males, has been described as a global tragedy—and in health terms, as an epidemic within an epidemic. Adolescents and young adults are the primary victims and perpetrators of violence in almost every region of the world.”
- 3 International Committee of the Red Cross, *Child Soldiers*, 2003, p. 5.
- 4 For a concise overview, see International Committee of the Red Cross, Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, “Legal Protection of Children in Armed Conflict”, 2003, <[http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/57JQUS/\\$FILE/ANG03\\_03\\_juridique\\_NEWlogo.pdf?>](http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/57JQUS/$FILE/ANG03_03_juridique_NEWlogo.pdf?>)
- 5 Under Article 3 common to all four Conventions and Additional Protocol II, art. 4.
- 6 Additional Protocol I (1977) to the Geneva Conventions (1949), Article 77, and Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, art. 4, para. 3.
- 7 Nina Huygen, *The Protection of Children in Armed Conflict Under International Law—A Comment on the Current Legal Framework and Suggestions for Improvement*, University of Amsterdam, master’s thesis, 1997, p. 27.
- 8 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 38, para. 4.
- 9 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the two additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions already prohibit all recruitment and use of those under 15.
- 10 Irma Specht, “Jobs for Rebels and Soldiers”, in Eugenia Date-Bah (ed.), *Jobs After War: A Critical Challenge in the Peace and Reconstruction Puzzle*, International Labour Organisation, InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction, 2003, pp. 73–110.
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## ACRONYMS

COHOM	Council Working Group on Human Rights
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DDRRR	disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EDF	European Development Fund
ERW	explosive remnants of war
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
IDP	internally displaced person
LRRD	Linking of Relief to Rehabilitation and Development
MDRP	Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program
NGO	non-governmental organization
RRM	Rapid Reaction Mechanism
SALW	small arms and light weapons
SSR	security sector reform
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund