



Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Réseau Inter-Agences pour l'Éducation en Situations d'Urgence
La Red Interagencial para Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia

INEE Good Practice Guide: Inclusive Education of Children At Risk – Child Soldiers and Adult Ex-Combatants

Large numbers of men, women and children are often mobilized as combatants during modern crises and require support to reintegrate back into society. Education is a vital component in their rehabilitation and reintegration. Education should ideally lead to a viable alternative to military life. Given their life experiences and potential volatility, ex-combatants need programs tailored to their specific needs. Some children and adults may wish to resume formal education, while others may need vocational and skills training to re-enter the economy. Given specific developmental and gender needs, female ex-combatants and child soldiers should be given special consideration.

Strategies

- **Understand the individual and group backgrounds of those being assisted**

Programs and activities must be tailored to the specific needs of ex-combatants and child soldiers. They became involved as combatants for many different reasons, including: security, protection, food, boredom, humiliation, frustration, intimidation, persuasion, promises of education, promises of employment, and to avenge deaths of family members.

It is important to know:

- 1) how and why they became part of the military (i.e. was service compulsory, forced or voluntary)
- 2) their background, including ethnicity and economic status
- 3) whether they want to return to their home areas or not
- 4) what they wish for the future

- **Use an integrated approach**

Education should be combined with psychosocial support and income generation assistance such as apprenticeships and loans for micro-enterprise.

- **Combine with initiatives for demobilization and to stop repeat recruitment**

To be successful, education programs of ex-combatants must be combined with initiatives to stop re-recruitment, and in the case of child soldiers, their demobilization. As a priority, active steps should be taken with governments and military to facilitate enforcement mechanisms to stop the recruitment of children.

- **Active involvement and support of community and family**

Social reintegration of ex-combatants and child soldiers depends upon their perceptions of

themselves, as well as their families and communities. Training and support should be given at all levels for reintegration to be lasting and successful. Additionally, there must be follow-up studies on the locations and activities of ex-soldiers following demobilization. In many cases, follow-up visits or monetary/material incentives to ex-soldiers and their families are essential to keeping those affected within the reintegration program.

Checklist

- What has been the role of child combatants in the conflict?
- How do individuals reach the demobilization sites?
- How will the demobilized soldiers be received? If temporary centres are necessary, are provisions made for life skills education?
- What measures have been taken to ensure the protection of those who have been demobilized and prevent their re-recruitment? What education needs to be provided on these subjects?
- Have the military and government taken steps to prevent re-recruitment?
- How long have individual combatants been part of the conflict? What has been their experience?
- Have children been asked whether they wish to be re-united with their families? Have mechanisms been put in place for this to occur? Have foster families or centres been established in the interim?
- Is it safe for children to be reintegrated into their communities? What factors make it difficult for children to reintegrate?
- Do children wish to be reintegrated into their home communities, to join other communities or to live on their own?
- Which groups of children are at greatest risk? i.e. girls, certain ethnic groups, demobilized soldiers near border areas
- Are child combatants separated from demobilized adults?
- Have government and military groups adopted laws prohibiting the recruitment of children? Have mechanisms been put into place for the enforcement of these laws?
- Have advocacy campaigns been established for communities to welcome ex-combatants and soldiers? Have key community leaders (political, governmental, religious, sports) been targeted for advocacy and support?
- Are there any traditional mechanisms that can be revived or altered to assist in reintegration?
- Has specific training been provided for those working with ex-child soldiers?
- Has documentation of the children's military activity been strictly forbidden?
- What services are being provided to the ex-combatants?
- Are the particular needs of female combatants addressed? Sexual violence prevention? Sanitary needs? Clothing?
- Are education programs being offered to both adult and child ex-combatants?
- What is blocking the child soldier's access to education? Is it the community? Family? Or the children themselves?
- What are the other complementary components of the education program, and are they fully funded?
- Are the particular needs of persons with disabilities taken into consideration? Prostheses? Are links made between support for child soldiers and programs for persons with disabilities?

Resources

- [Children and Armed Conflict: International Standards for Action](#) (2003) *United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Human Security Network.*

Education

- [Crisis and Decent Work](#) (pdf) *A collection of Essays by Eugenia Date-Bah.*
- [Guidelines for Employment and Skills Training in Conflict Affected Countries](#)
- [Manual on Training and Employment Options for Ex-Combatants](#) (ILO, 1997). *Updated version forthcoming*
- [ILO's Technical Assistance Projects in Conflict-affected Countries](#)

ILO, the lead UN agency for demobilization, publishes a yearly update of their programs worldwide and contact information.

Health

- [Demobilization and its implication for HIV/AIDS](#) (pdf) *International Centre for Migration and Health*
- [HIV Prevention and Behavior Change in International Military Populations, Training Module 7: HIV Prevention in Crisis Settings.](#) (March 2001) *Civil-Military Alliance. New Orleans, CERTI Project, Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, Tulane University, New Orleans.*

Child Soldiers

- [Sri Lanka: Coalition of rights groups urges Tamil Tigers to stop recruiting children at Hindu temple festivals.](#) *By Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers*
- [Dealing with alleged child collaborators in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.](#) *A workshop organized by Defence for Children - Palestine Section, Ramallah, the West Bank, 20 April 2005, By Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers*
- [Child Soldiers: Care and Protection for Children in Emergencies - A Field Guide](#) (2001) *By Mark Lorey, Save the Children USA*
- [Action for the Rights of Children \(ARC\) Critical Issues: Child Soldiers](#) (pdf) *By Save the Children / UNHCR*

- [Center for Defense Information](#). Various documents offering military perspective on ending the use of children in armed conflict
- [Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers](#). Established by eight leading international NGOs to advocate for the end of child recruitment and specifically the adoption of and adherence to the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict. [Click here](#) for the 2004 Report.
- Global Information Networks in Education (GINIE)
- [Human Rights Watch](#). Provides [detailed reports](#) on the situation of child combatants in various countries.
- [Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights](#). Provides information on key treaties, juvenile justice and country by country observations of the CRC.
- [Rädda Barnen \(Save the Children Sweden\)](#). Detailed database of child soldiers and full text copies of all legal instruments, a database of bibliographic information and a quarterly newsletter.
- [UNICEF](#). Includes policy statements on child soldiers, details of the Optional Protocol, and information on Security Council Resolution No. 1314 on children and war.
- [The Use of Children as Soldiers in Africa - A country analysis of child recruitment and participation in armed conflict](#). Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation Terre des Hommes, Jesuit Refugee Service, Quaker United Nations Office, Rädda Barnen)