

Demobilisation and Community-based Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers in Maniema, Orientale and Northern Katanga Provinces

Quarterly Report
October 1st - December 31st 2003

CARE International – Maniema province

Introduction

CARE started the program on December 1st with the arrival of the Project Manager Luc Theron. Prior to this, Luc had been to Maniema on an assessment mission with the NGO Group Coordinator from October 29 to November 2nd.

By the time CARE arrived in Kindu, the demobilization of child soldiers had already started under the supervision of the 7th military region and without following the national DDR process. The Regional Commander, General Widi Divioka, had decided to proceed faster than planned in order to gain access to the main routes in the province and free them from the Mayi-Mayi, an armed group that was blocking them. The ultimate objective was to accelerate the return to normalcy and to allow the free movement of people and trade.

Overall Goal/Purpose

To effectively demobilize and reintegrate former child soldiers in Orientale, northern Katanga and Maniema Provinces, based on the design of an integrated program to help children leave the armed forces and resume their development within a family and community environment that follows international norms and lessons learned from past and ongoing child soldier demobilization programs.

Activities

Assessment mission

During this preliminary mission with the NGO Group Coordinator, CARE met with all the civil and military authorities in the province, the UN agencies, local and international NGOs. The only notable exception was the Governor of Maniema, who was traveling. In his place, CARE met with the Deputy Governor.

CARE Project Manager Luc Theron introduced the MDRP program to the main civil society representatives, particularly church and Muslim leaders, who are very influential in Maniema. Civil society capacity, however, is rather weak in the province.

Tracing

Family reunification started in Kindu on December 31st, when 9 children were taken home. In Punia (northern Maniema) 56 children were reunified the day after their demobilization. Tracing activities are carried out in collaboration with ICRC. A

specialized team trained by SC-UK coordinates the activities in Maniema, leads the tracing and prepares both children and their families for reunification.

Sensitization

SC-UK trained CARE social workers and monitored their fieldwork. Initial meetings with administrative, military and political actors, as well as community leaders were set up to start sensitizing them on child protection and explain the DDR process. As of December 19, right after the security incident at the stadium, daily meetings with the community were organized.

Religious leaders play a crucial role in the community, which we are going to rely on at every stage of the sensitization process in Maniema.

CTO Kindu

UNICEF handed over the management of the CTO in Kindu to CARE on December 6. As the emergency demobilization continued, priority was given to providing basic assistance to released children. CARE continued its collaboration with UNICEF on food items provision, as well as with WFP and local communities. The local market also provided non-food items, such as sleeping mats. MONUC provided water and around-the-clock security.

All children were given medical screening and necessary treatment, including 'disinfestation', upon arrival. CARE partnered with the NGO Merlin for medical assistance and follow-up. Children were registered by ICRC and documented directly at the CTO.

The local child protection NGO platform played an active role in the establishment of the CTO by seconding its representatives as center staff. All personnel was qualified and received continuous on-the-job training by the consultants.

CTO Punia

In view of imminent demobilization, CARE opened a CTO in Punia. The demobilization exercise took place on December 23. 141 soldiers released by the military claimed to be children. After verification of their age and status, 75 were admitted to the CTO. 56 were reunified. Tracing activities were carried out with the local Red Cross. Red Cross messages were sent to the children's families upon their arrival. As usual, the major challenge to family tracing has been lack of access to the most isolated areas of reunification.

The CTO offered vocational training in agriculture and informal literacy classes. Government authorities from CTPC visited the CTO on December 30.

Community sensitization started with the help of local partners. CARE organized 3 meetings in preparation of the demobilization exercise. 775 beneficiaries attended the sessions.

Results by Objective

Objective One

Develop a profile of the situation of child soldiers in or originating from Orientale, North Katanga and Maniema provinces, and evaluate the good faith of all accessible armed groups to provide access to and develop DDR programs for these children.

The assessment mission allowed CARE to introduce the children's DDR process and its program objectives to key actors in Maniema. It also contributed to the planning of regional strategies and local partnerships which have been ongoing since November 2003.

Objective Two

Assess the current capacity of families and communities to facilitate the reintegration of children returning from armed groups, and identify and develop potential partners and resources needed for successful reintegration and prevention of recruitment, through an action-oriented process that will include pilot activities.

Due to the emergency situation arising, priority was given to emergency response. Nevertheless, five local committees comprising representatives of the local NGO child protection platform were set up to evaluate the capacity for reintegration by the Kindu community. The results of this assessment will be developed and analyzed in the next reporting period.

Objective Three

Design a comprehensive demobilization and reintegration (DR) program for child soldiers in selected provinces within the framework of the national demobilization and reinsertion program as it evolves.

This objective will be based on the results from objectives one and two and further details will therefore be provided in subsequent reports. However the emergency phase contributed to intensified planning, design and implementation of demobilization and reintegration within the national framework as it stands currently.

Objective Four

Implement the comprehensive DR program in Maniema province, in close collaboration with the national program, UNICEF and other key actors for a trial implementation period of six months and produce a proposal for a second implementation phase in year two.

As for Objective Three, the emergency intervention in December contributed to accelerating the implementation of the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers into their communities. The response proved to be successful thanks to the proactive coordination with all main DDR actors in the province, especially military authorities, community representatives and local child protection agencies. Community sensitization

was also key in the transit care and family reunification phases, as it prepared the ground for community acceptance and provided security to children. A tracing team was formed to support ICRC in reunifying children and conducting family mediation when necessary. The team had the opportunity to test new tracing tools that are being developed in national DDR fora, like the documentation forms as revised by the CTPC-DDR Sub-working Group on children.

Adjustments

The emergency phase

Upon the arrival of the CARE Project Manager, UNICEF had already opened an emergency center (CTO) in a public building. The CTO hosted 112 children. 240 additional children, who had been released by the military and registered by UNICEF at the Kindu stadium, had already self-reunified with their families. In order to respond to the emergency, CARE contracted 3 local consultants and asked Save the Children UK (SC-UK) in Goma to second 8 of their most experienced local staff and partner NGO staff to support the demobilization process. Specifically the seconded staff was responsible for:

- assisting in the establishment of another CTO;
- training 61 social workers representing child protection organizations from the local NGO platform;
- conducting tracing, sensitization and social work activities.

CARE quickly set up its staff team in Kindu, as well as a second, smaller team in Punia to respond to the demobilization process in northern Maniema.

Constraints and Challenges

Verification

The major challenge has been the number of adults trying to register as children in order to receive assistance.

Security

The Mayi-Mayi have blocked access along the main routes, which has interfered with normal activities. CARE signaled all security incidents to military authorities and MONUC.

On December 17 a group of youths armed with stones and bamboo canes from the Mikelenge neighborhood in Kindu attacked the children hosted at the interim care center (CTO) temporarily set up at the stadium. CARE had formerly received the authorization to use the stadium area from the Governor of Maniema Province and the Mayor of Kindu to respond to the request of the 7th military region to host up to 300 demobilized child soldiers. Two people were injured in the attack, one of whom seriously, and were both hospitalized.

Logistics

Logistics and lack of access are the main problem. The tracing team needs more bicycles, more radios for security purposes. These expenses were not included in the budget. The usual logistical challenges hampered our work.

Coordination and Partnerships

- Relations with administrative authorities remained infrequent due their limited involvement in the DDR process.
- Collaboration with the military authorities improved except for the fact that there was no planning of demobilization exercises. The military region expects too much of CARE and delegates all responsibility in relation to children.
- The SC-UK team did an excellent job in setting up the program, despite the many difficulties related to the emergency.
- Working with the child protection NGO platform proved to be difficult due to leadership problems within the platform.

Miscellaneous

- A child was evacuated to Goma with the help of ICRC for surgery. He had been shot in the womb.
- The child that was injured at the stadium was treated at the MONUC hospital in Kindu and later reunified with his family.

Statistics

Demobilized children	270
Demobilized girls	2
Children in transit at the CTO Kindu	195
Children in transit at the CTO Punia	75
Children registered by UNICEF without going through a CTO	240
Reunified children	69
Adults reunified (with the help of CARE)	19
Children who escaped due to the attack at the stadium	54

Submitted by Luc Theron, Project Manager for Children's DDR
CARE RDC