

“DDR: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE”

Meeting Notes, July 24, 2006

Please note: The opinions expressed in WNCAC meetings and reflected in these notes are those of the individual participants and are not endorsed by the WNCAC, which provides an open forum for exchange among those concerned with children affected by armed conflict.

The Washington Network held its bi-monthly meeting on July 24, 2006 to discuss the past, present, and future of DDR programming. Participants discussed DDR programming in the past, then the present programming and how it’s evolved, and concluded with recommendations and wish lists for future programming.

The conversation was framed by *Mike Wessells*, Co-Chair of a U. N. Task Force on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. His research on children and armed conflict examines child soldiers, psychosocial assistance in emergencies, and post-conflict reconstruction for peace. He regularly advises U. N. agencies, donors, and governments on the situation of children in armed conflict and issues regarding child protection and well-being.

Presentation:

PROBLEMS IN DDR

- DDR? DDRR? DRR?
- Terminology
 - “Reintegration” assumption that you’re going back to something, but this is not always the reality, or good policy. Some of the children have been born into the armed force.
 - Need for stable structures to be reintegrated to.
 - “Demobilization” assumption that there is legitimacy, formality in this process
- Agendas: human rights vs. security, where DDR in the human rights context means the reestablishment of rights, and DDR in the security context means peace by ceasefire and dealing with a national army. (ex: UNICEF vs. DPKO)
- Universalizing—the cookie-cutter phenomenon
- Do no harm? There is so much harm being done. (ex: cash payment program, unfounded promises to youth, pathologizing tendency—considering ex-combatants a lost generation)
- Short-term vs. long-term approaches to funding. DDR has to be measured in years.

DDR: PAST

- 1980s-approx. 1995
- CRITICISM:

- Security focus
- No child specific programming
- Programming for ex-combatants vs. “camp followers”
- Girls ignored, boys considered the most risk
- Programs mirrored adult packages
- Non-holistic
- Emphasis on individuals
- ACHIEVEMENTS:
 - Tracing and reunification methodology
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Proactive, focused advocacy for children’s DDR

DDR:PRESENT

- DEVELOPMENTS:
 - Graca Machel report (1996): brought a range of issues to the forefront
 - Cape Town Principles: rid distinction between combatants and camp followers and “child soldier” redefined
 - Girls soldiers recognized
 - CAFF: children associated with fighting forces
 - Occasional link of DDR programs to a peace process
 - HIV/AIDS link
 - DDR “umbrella” of child protection
 - DPKO child protection officers
 - Monitoring watchdogs: The Watchlist, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
 - USG donors fund projects (Labor, State, USAID, etc.)
- NEEDS:
 - Better protection against re-recruitment
 - DDR during conflict
 - Systematic approach, including: tracing and reunification, interim care and support, community sensitization and mobilization, family mediation, health, education, livelihoods, cultural and religious supports, psychosocial (identity shifts), protection monitoring and action
 - Cross-border action
 - “Integrated approaches to supporting vulnerable children” (programs need to include *all* war affected children.
 - Standards strengthened

DDR FUTURE

- Revamping of the Cape Town Principles (“Paris Declaration”)
 - Terminology changes: no more “child soldiers” or “CAFF” = “children associated with armed forces”, “straight 18”, incl. juvenile justice
 - Institution of separate children’s DDR- ex: UN-IDDRS (interagency DDR): collective responsibility, “prevention, release, integration”, 7 UN agencies incl. UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, DPKO, UNFPA
 - Integrated assistance

- Systematize child protection
- Bring these issues to the forefront of the political agenda

WISH LIST

- Make “R” trump “DD”
- Consistency and coordination
- Support children/youth who can’t return home
- More youth engagement
- Reintegration of girls, child mothers
- Research on effective practice
- Effective recruitment prevention strategies (esp. cross-border, with non-state actors, and in ending impunity)
- Link DDR and security
- Need flexible and long-term funding mechanisms

Discussion Points:

Have there been changes in family tracing mechanisms?

- Mobility mapping---of all the areas, this is the most sophisticated in DDR program growth (IRC)
- The use of video has been an essential tool
- Ground-level struggles with forms

What current programming is there with combatants and noncombatants?

- Programming needs emphasis on nonviolent conflict resolution and restorative justice; using traditional healing practices
- Subordinate goals strategies(ex: CCF in Sierra Leone: dialogue and community strengthening emphasis, humanizing impact)
- Community-based processes

An integrated approach---what are the costs?

- Make it formal policy (like in education policy)
- Consider community needs first
- Get the balance right; special needs accounted for
- Community-led discussion regarding children/youth needs, especially including their participation

“children” vs. “youth”

- Do your cultural homework, community definitions matter.
- Need fluidity
- Include youth in evaluating what we do.
- We shift from one definition to another based on our interests.
- Child soldier = straight 18? Dilemma between advocacy world and international law. There is a need for flexibility; understand relevancy for state actors.

Case Example: Uganda

- SWAY impact assessment [[http://www.sway-uganda.org/SWAY Entrepreneurship Evaluation.pdf](http://www.sway-uganda.org/SWAY_Entrepreneurship_Evaluation.pdf)]
- Focused too much on centers...they're becoming institutions.
- Need community-based reintegration strategy
- Disproportionate attention on formerly abducted children.
- Lack of protection mechanisms

Re-recruitment Issues

- Poverty
- Look through the lenses of the ex-combatants
- Coping mechanisms; developmental psychology approach; resiliency in short vs. long term conflict

Program Sharing:

- Child Soldiers Initiative: Expanding the Dialogue Workshop in August
 - Integrated approach, including security sector, to talk about the prevention of child soldiering
 - www.childsoldiersinitiative.org
- Book: "Child Soldiers in Africa" – Alcinda Honwana
<http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/14183.html>
- Marc Sommers literature review on youth and armed conflict.
http://www.crin.org/docs/edu_youth_conflict.pdf
- New Book by Mike Wessells to be published in December: "Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection"
- CARE and Hope for Africa Conflict project collaborating on early childhood education programming (Uganda)
<http://www.care.org/careswork/projects/UGA066.asp>
- World Bank trust fund developing for children affected by armed conflicts
 - Collaboration focus
 - In-country approach
 - Max. \$350,000
 - To develop WB programs.

Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict : <http://www.wncac.org/>