

OPAC Annex 5

USAID Efforts to Address the Unlawful Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers

Below are examples of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs and interventions that address the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. The information, collected in May 2015, is organized into three categories, one focused on documentation of abuses, the second focused on prevention, and the third focused on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) efforts.

Documentation

- To improve global documentation and accountability on protection issues, USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports the UN Security Council-established monitoring and reporting mechanisms.
- Globally, USAID/OFDA supports efforts to ensure that relief agencies have optimal child protection guidance, which could strengthen efforts to protect children—including from recruitment into armed activities. Relevant efforts to improve guidelines for child protection include the following programs:
 - With Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 funding, the Tides Center Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is measuring the impact of the UN's Children and Armed Conflict Agenda on child protection efforts in the field, identifying progress made in meeting the agenda's criteria, and developing recommendations to improve effectiveness.
 - FY 2013/2014 USAID/OFDA funding has enabled partner Terre Des Hommes to produce the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*, a central resource to guide operational planning for humanitarian child protection efforts. Among other components, this resource provides guidance on ethical documentation of protection violations against children, including involvement with armed groups. The standards also provide defined child protection indicators to standardize and improve program evaluation and field reporting.

- Ongoing USAID/OFDA funding supports Save the Children in the development of a practical toolkit to measure and assess the scale of separated and unaccompanied children in emergencies. By improving capacity among service provider and emergency responders to identify these children through the tool, partners will be better informed in program design and implementation, as these children are vulnerable to a variety of risks in addition to forced conscription.

Prevention

- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), USAID/OFDA funding to UNICEF has enabled the agency to continue working on prevention of child recruitment and targeting by armed groups. According to UNICEF, between 2010 and mid-2014, USAID support helped train more than 200 community leaders on child protection strategies and raised awareness on child needs—with a focus on armed group-related threats—among more than 110,000 local authorities, teachers, military personnel, community leaders, and children.
- In eastern DRC, USAID/OFDA, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), is providing psychosocial assistance, along with case-management services, to children in distress through the USAID-supported rapid response mechanism.
- Through ongoing FY 2014 funding, USAID is supporting IRC to develop a Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit for emergency contexts. Upon completion, the toolkit will include a standard package of recreational and social activities, psychosocial materials for children exhibiting distress, basic literacy and numeracy activities, parenting tools, training materials for social workers, and monitoring guidelines.
- Through the USAID/OFDA-supported, International Organization for Migration (IOM)-managed Rapid Response Fund, the South Sudanese NGO Street Aid Children is providing both preventative and responsive protection assistance to conflict-affected individuals and IDPs—including children—in Jonglei State. Street Aid Children is establishing child protection and psychosocial support activities, training volunteers and social workers to provide protection services, and maintaining child-friendly spaces to help safeguard children from protection threats, including forced recruitment.
- USAID's collaboration with the National Inter-institutional Committee for the Prevention of Recruitment (CIPRUNA) in Colombia is empowering 12,000 children and youth in more

than 50 municipalities (including high-risk indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities) to resist recruitment by illegal armed groups, and is working to strengthen nine key Government of Colombia agencies that directly support prevention of recruitment efforts.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Efforts

- In Nigeria, several USAID/OFDA partners are providing essential services to children affected by armed groups in northeastern Nigeria. USAID/OFDA-supported activities include:
 - providing medical and psychosocial support to girls who survived abduction, their family members, and affected communities;
 - training local caseworkers on psychosocial support for families of abducted children;
 - establishing child protection committees;
 - deploying mobile teams to assess and respond to psychosocial needs among conflict-affected populations, including children; and
 - training family members, governmental and non-governmental actors, and the media in basic psychosocial support activities for children affected by conflict.
- In the Central African Republic (CAR), USAID/OFDA supported UNICEF to deliver immediate life-saving services to, and lead reintegration assistance for, children released by armed groups. UNICEF provided newly released children with health care services, psychosocial support, and family reunification assistance. UNICEF also provided older children with accelerated education and vocational training to help improve their livelihood prospects and avoid re-recruitment into armed activity. In 2013 and 2014, UNICEF and its partners secured the release of approximately 3,300 children, including more than 650 girls, from armed groups in CAR. From FY 2012 to FY 2014, USAID/OFDA partner Mercy Corps provided support to children the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attempted to recruit, child-headed households, and adolescents separated from their families or residing in conflict zones. Activities included creating safe spaces for children and youth, establishing community networks to identify children affected by the LRA and facilitate their access to psychosocial and medical services, and managing child protection committees and play-therapy clubs.

- In Somalia, USAID/OFDA funding to UNICEF is supporting children affected by armed groups through case management, provision of specialized services, and/or referrals to other service providers. In recent months, UNICEF and its partners have referred hundreds of complex emergency-affected children to medical care and psychosocial support providers. UNICEF also helped reunify children affected by clan militia activities or trafficking situations with their families following a best interest determination. In addition, UNICEF is leading a case management program tailored to the unique needs of children formerly associated with armed groups, which culminates in a graduation and community reintegration process.
- In South Sudan, USAID/OFDA partner UNICEF provides children released by armed groups with food, medical care, psychosocial assistance, and shelter at interim care centers.
- For several years, USAID/OFDA has funded UNICEF in DRC in support of child protection activities, including efforts to both prevent child recruitment into armed activity and supportive services for children formerly associated with armed groups. In LRA-affected areas of DRC, UNICEF established child protection mobile teams, training community members and service providers on procedures for assisting a newly escaped/released child, and leading family reunification efforts and community reintegration for children, among other activities. USAID/OFDA also funded UNICEF to assess humanitarian and protection needs among families affected by clashes between armed groups and the Armed Forces of DRC (FARDC) in Katanga Province to determine, among other factors, the impact of fighting on children and other vulnerable groups.
- A UNICEF-conducted evaluation of programming in DRC reported that, between 2010 and mid-2014, USAID/OFDA-funded activities helped identify and temporarily provide services to almost 4,200 children associated with armed groups—including 1,050 girl children—and provide reintegration opportunities for nearly 3,700 children.
- With other USAID funds, USAID has supported advocacy work with armed forces and groups in the DRC to secure the release of children, especially girls, still in their ranks and ensure access to medical care and psychosocial support. During 2014, USAID-funded centers assisted the rehabilitation and reintegration of 2,172 children (294 girls) released from armed

groups. To date, 6,446 (including 600 girls) have been aided since September 2011. A total of 1,844 children were reunited with their families.

- Since the DRC's signing of the Action Plan to Prevent and End the Recruitment of Children by the FARDC and Other Grave Violations of Children's Rights in October 2012, FARDC recruitment and utilization of child soldiers has been reduced to negligible numbers. As such, the activities focus principally on children who are members of armed groups (conscripts and volunteers) or are vulnerable (geographically and/or socioeconomically) to recruitment. The most recent modification to the award stresses the wide spectrum of long-term reintegration into society from a holistic, yet individualized, approach that includes psychosocial support, education, income generation, community integration, family tracing, and foster families to reduce the risks of recidivism.
- USAID's consistent funding of the child soldier reintegration portion of the DRC's current plan on DDR, which has been fraught with delays and funding gaps, ensures that this key element is not neglected.
- To reintegrate children rescued from illegal armed groups and to prevent future recruitment, USAID's support to the Colombian National Welfare Institute (ICBF) and other key Government of Colombia entities enabled more effective physical, psychological, social, and economic assistance to children and adolescent ex-combatants to support their reintegration back into society.
- In FY 2011, USAID/OFDA partner International Rescue Committee led community awareness-raising activities on the rights of children, child protection risks—including recruitment into armed groups—and how to identify and combat child exploitation in their communities in Côte d'Ivoire. The information campaigns led to the identification of some children actively being recruited into armed groups, but who had not yet joined. In Liberia, IRC managed a child protection referral system; worked to prevent child recruitment into armed groups and sexual exploitation and abuse of children through community-based child protection networks; created safe homes and child protection services; and developed a referral system providing services and emotional support to at-risk children.