



## 2018–2025: from the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers to the Nairobi Process and the Financing Innovation Forum:

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Engagement by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups



Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for  
**CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

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# Foreword



In 2023, 10,600 children formerly associated with armed forces or groups were provided with protection or reintegration support in countries on the Children and Armed Conflict agenda, in which during the same period, 8,655 children were recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups.

These numbers are data verified by the United Nations (UN) and we know that they only represent the tip of the iceberg. Numbers of children in need of reintegration are far greater, making this a pressing issue.

Providing meaningful and sustainable reintegration services to children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups is critical to help children transition back to civilian life, heal and rebuild their lives, but also for communities and societies to build lasting peace.

When I was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC) in 2017, I realized that reintegration was not just a humanitarian necessity, but a critical phase for both, the protection of millions of children and the prevention of grave violations against them. I recognized its significant potential for conflict prevention and came to see it as a strategic investment to build sustainable peace.

However, this can only be done by recognizing the central role children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups play in peace and security. Yet, despite the greatest efforts of all concerned parties, and particularly reintegration actors like UNICEF, child reintegration has remained chronically under-funded over the years. As SRSG-CAAC, I attempted to re-galvanize momentum around the criticality to invest in reintegration programs beyond the humanitarian spectrum, across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus to secure long-term, sustainable and predictable support and funding.

Partnerships with new donors and institutions were established, research projects were conducted to identify gaps, establish data baselines and improve support to child reintegration.

# Foreword

A platform of Member States, United Nations entities, the World Bank, civil society organizations and academia was created to develop innovative ideas to establish long-term and sustainable child reintegration programs. The platform initiative was launched in the presence of Her Majesty, Queen Mathilde of Belgium in 2018.

Following the launch, I had the honor to co-chair the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers<sup>[1]</sup> with the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF at the time, Mr. Omar Abdi. Supporting Member States joined us in this endeavor under the leadership of France, Kazakhstan and Malta and formed a Group of Friends of Reintegration. Academia and civil society were brought together to find new pathways to rethink our approach on the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, which resulted in the publication of innovative research papers. My Office mobilized local organizations around the world to bring the voices of children through consultations on their experiences and needs to the forefront, in a unique stakeholder-led forum: the Nairobi Process. These stakeholders have moved forward to create their own international non-governmental organization to continue their work and engagement on child reintegration, in a truly inspiring journey.

The Pact of the Future reminded us that children and young people are critical agents of change essential contributors to peace and security, and key promoters of a sustainable development and human rights. They are the future generation. Member States have committed to invest in the social and economic development of children and young people so that they can reach their full potential and contribute to peaceful and prosperous societies. Reintegration is piece and parcel of children's development.

I stand resolute in that supporting meaningfully and sustainably child reintegration is the best possible investment that States and donors can make for long-term peace.

**Virginia Gamba,**  
Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

[1] Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

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# I. The Genesis



## 1.1 Preliminary observations

The mandate of the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was created in 1996 after an alarming report to the General Assembly (UNGA) by Graça Machel that children were not only affected by war but they were bearing the brunt of it in conflict countries. Months after the report, the UNGA established the office of the Special Representative with the mandate to advocate globally and engage with States, regional organizations, civil society and others on the plight of children in armed conflict. Twenty-eight years later, it has been documented, by the UN and others, that after a child lives through armed conflict and the horrific experiences that entails, they are forever changed. While each case and each impact are individual to that child, in the end children all are negatively impacted and have to live with the consequences of war for the rest of their lives. As children are the most vulnerable members of a population, adults—both inside and outside their country—are obligated to help them regain their lives and help them live up to their full potential.

While the onus of assistance falls on all able adults, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) clearly states that the primary responsibility for protecting and promoting the rights of children falls upon States in which jurisdiction children find themselves [2]. However, during conflict a government may not be capable, or willing, to ensure that children are being protected and able to claim their rights, it often falls to other actors to assist them. This includes the UN and the international humanitarian and development community, who do much to help and protect children in insecure environments.

One of the most egregious violations against children in and around conflict situations is that of recruitment and use of children—as combatants, lookouts, cooks, sex slaves, porters, and more, by government armed forces or nonstate armed groups. It is this violation that spurred the UN General Assembly to create the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC) in 1996. It is also the first grave violation specifically identified by the UN Security Council in 1999 when it considered the situation of children in armed conflict as a threat to international peace and security and seized itself of the issue.

Five other violations against children were also identified subsequently—killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access—as the formal Monitoring and

[2] article 2 of the CRC.

Reporting Mechanism was established in 2005 by Security Council resolution 1612[3].

### **Definition of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAGs):**

A child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.

### **Paris Principles, 2007**

In reviewing the situation of these children in 2017, the Office of the SRSG CAAC (OSRSG-CAAC) noticed that despite the incredible efforts of UN member states and others over the years, children were not always returning to a peaceful life after being released from armed forces and armed groups. While advocacy for their release and calls for non-repetition were undertaken by the UN and were effective, numbers of children or former children who had turned 18, would emerge from their association without the necessary care and support they needed to recover and return to society. It was an underrecognized part of the cycle of advocacy to ensure this cohort had the support and tools they needed to thrive after their separation from armed entities.

Despite challenges, many children were fortunate to receive some assistance, such as health care, catch up education or job training, but it was not systematic, uniform or even recorded as 'reintegration'.

As activities to support these children fell under the 'humanitarian' pillar, aid was also short-term, and not long-term (3-5 years minimum), as recommended by child protection experts. In addition, not all children received care. This was not because of a lack of desire on the part of humanitarian actors, but rather a lack of funds and of systemic planning and capacity that thwarted efforts.

## **1.2. What is child reintegration and why does it matter?**

[3] For more information on the MRM, see the Guidelines and Field Manual on Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations Against Children, Publications & Working Papers – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict



The United Nations (UN) define the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups as the process through which children transition back into society and assume meaningful roles as civilians.

This process helps them develop identities that are accepted by their families and communities within a broader context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic, and social conditions necessary for children to maintain their life, livelihood, and dignity are in place. The goal of reintegration is to ensure children can access their rights, including formal and non-formal education, family unity, dignified livelihoods, and protection from harm[4].

The UN highlights the importance of addressing social and psychological issues related to identity, trust, social networks, trauma, community acceptance, and reconciliation in order to prevent violence and build lasting peace. Children who have been recruited by armed forces or armed groups may have experienced significant harm and therefore have specific needs. These children might have joined or supported armed groups due to duress, coercion, or manipulation. As such, children should be regarded primarily as victims, regardless of the nature of the armed forces or armed groups involved.

For children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups, it is broadly acknowledged among child protection practitioners that the focus should be on creating a supportive environment for their return to civilian life.



This includes ensuring their meaningful participation in reintegration programs, addressing the trauma they have experienced, reinforcing their self-worth, and empowering them to contribute to society and peace. Also crucial is to counter the factors that led to their recruitment and address the drivers that might lead to re-recruitment. To avoid stigmatization and social tensions, it is paramount that reintegration support be community-based and benefit all vulnerable children in the community, including those who did not join armed forces or armed groups.

In all decisions that affect children, their best interests must be a primary consideration. Furthermore, preventing the recruitment or re-recruitment of children must be a central focus throughout all DDR processes and phases. Prevention efforts begin early—ideally before the onset of armed conflict—and continue throughout the conflict and post-conflict phases. These efforts should consider the structural, social, and individual factors that contribute to the risk of recruitment or re-recruitment.

The **2007 Paris Principles** emphasize that the release, protection, and reintegration of children who have been unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups must always be prioritized. These principles guide interventions aimed at preventing unlawful recruitment, facilitating the release of children associated with armed forces and groups, ensuring their reintegration, and creating the most protective environment for all children[5].

The **UN CRC** and its **Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC)** form the foundation for the principles, norms, and standards that underpin DDR processes for children. The CRC defines a child as any person under the age of 18 and outlines their fundamental rights, which support the reintegration process. These rights include the right to life, survival, and development; the right to safety and protection from violence; the right to education; and the right to physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration.

The OPAC provides that children be protected from recruitment and use in hostilities by armed forces and armed groups with the responsibility for States to demobilize anyone under the age of 18 from their ranks and to provide physical, psychological recovery services and facilitate their social reintegration. The OPAC extended its provisions to non-State armed groups.

[5 ]Principles and Guidelines on children associated with armed forces and armed groups ('Paris Principles'), February 2007. Initial and ground principles were established by the "Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Prevention of Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa" ("the Cape Town Principles"), 1997 and "The Paris Commitments to Protect Children Unlawfully Recruited or Used by Armed Forces or Armed Groups" ("The Paris Commitments"), 2005.

**For example: Article 39 of the CRC specifies that recovery and reintegration should take place in an environment that promotes health, self-respect, and dignity. The OPAC, specifically Article 7, provides the legal basis for supporting CAAFAG, obliging signatory states to rehabilitate and socially reintegrate these children.**

Additional international legal frameworks complement the CRC and OPAC in protecting and promoting the rights of children affected by conflict, including those undergoing reintegration. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 29 on Forced Labor and No. 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor further provide additional frameworks to protect children's rights during reintegration.

### **1.3. Child reintegration: How does it fit into the CAAC mandate?**

When the SRSG-CAAC began her tenure in 2017, she identified reintegration as a central theme for her mandate and made it a priority to advance progress in this regard in support of efforts and work by UNICEF and other child protection agencies and stakeholders. She recognized that providing meaningful, long-term reintegration services for children affected by armed conflict was an enormous challenge, particularly with the limited resources available at the time. "Our challenge is to give children the best possible chance to rebuild their lives after trauma... Every child released should be seen as a survivor and as an agent of change, capable of helping build lasting peace in their community and country. We cannot abandon these children; ensuring they have access to meaningful reintegration is essential. Our responsibility to them must not end," she emphasized in a keynote address at a side event on child reintegration in Geneva on March 7, 2018.

Despite tireless efforts of UNICEF, national authorities, NGOs, and other partners, it was noted that reintegration remained a small part, a fraction of the broader recovery process and was often overlooked in efforts to stabilize war-torn societies. A key consideration was that the demobilization and disarmament phases of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) were far better funded than reintegration itself, which had serious consequences for children. Reintegration programs, she pointed out, were chronically underfunded and often seen as a humanitarian issue, thereby linked to short-term humanitarian funding streams.

However, reintegration is not just a humanitarian necessity but a critical phase for both protection and prevention, with significant potential for conflict prevention. It is a strategic investment in building and sustaining peace, with children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups representing a key group for long-term peace and security.

Recognizing child reintegration as a fundamental human right, it is both a collective obligation and a moral imperative to advocate for greater action and funding to ensure that all children who survived the horrors of war received the vital services they need to rebuild their lives.

This led to a call for a broader, more diverse audience to engage in advocating for increased, predictable, and sustainable funding for reintegration programs. Partners and Member States were urged to rethink their approach to child reintegration—moving away from viewing it merely as a humanitarian gesture aimed at helping a vulnerable group of children, and instead recognizing it as a vital, strategic component of post-conflict rebuilding. Indeed, a case was made by OSRSG-CAAC and the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers (GCR) that the only truly effective and sustainable way to attack the problem was to ensure support from entities and funding streams from across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN).



**A happy, healthy child is not a security threat; they are a contributor to society, to development, to peacebuilding, and to prevention. Children are agents of change.**

Virginia Gamba

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

With this in mind, the SRSG's office called for a deeper understanding of how reintegration programs could contribute to sustainable peace and development and align with the broader goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030. This call engineered a series of initiatives that began in 2018 and included the creation of the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers ('Global Coalition'), the Group of Friends for Reintegration of Children, the Financing Innovation Forum ('Forum'), and the **Nairobi Process**—all aimed at ensuring that child reintegration be recognized as an essential investment in a peaceful future, as well as a humanitarian imperative.

## **1.4 The Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers**

The Global Coalition [7] was launched on 28 September 2018 during a high-level event titled "Funding the Future: Challenges and Responses to the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers"[8] in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen Mathilde of Belgium, President Coleiro Preca of Malta, The Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium Mr. Reynders, the National Security Advisor of Nigeria Mr. Sidibay, the Special Representative, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Mr. Abdi, War Child CEO Mr. Williams. The Global Coalition served as an alliance of Member States, United Nations entities, the World Bank, civil society organizations and academia to innovate new ideas to sustainably address support for child reintegration programs. The initiative was rooted in a desire to bring all actors, policy and decision-makers, practitioners, donors, UN and civil society, across the HDP nexus, to the table. At the meeting, the Special Representative announced that over the next 12 months, her Office would convene protection actors, donors, experts and other stakeholders to develop a Road Map towards more comprehensive and sustainable funding for reintegration, and make concrete recommendations.

[7] <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-child-soldiers/>

[8] The event can be watched at: [Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)





**The Global Coalition was co-chaired by the Office of the SRSG CAAC and UNICEF and composed of**

**Steering  
Committee**

(Member States, the UN,  
the World Bank and  
NGOs)

**Expert  
Advisory Group**

(the UN, the World Bank,  
NGOs and academia)



The Steering Committee tasked its Expert Advisory Group to conduct research to study key areas of child reintegration, including how it was or was not bridging the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus. Over a 12-month research process, the Global Coalition was able to identify the main gaps and needs in child reintegration funding and programming, a process that resulted in the publication of three briefing papers in 2020 as well as an Overview Summary with a foreword by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed: (1) “Gaps and Needs for the Successful Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups or Armed Forces”; (2) “Reframing Child Reintegration from Humanitarian Action to Development, Prevention, Peacebuilding and Beyond”; and (3) “Financing Support for Child Reintegration Issues and Options Study”. These papers outlined key recommendations focusing on new modalities and mechanisms for child reintegration to ensure long-term and sustainable funding for this strategic post-conflict intervention. They were launched during an online event in July 2021 attended by over 90 Member States, UN representatives, academics and civil society, illustrating the high interest generated by the findings of the papers.

The Global Coalition was supported by a **Friends of Reintegration Group** co-chaired by France, Kazakhstan and Malta, and composed of 28 Member States. Membership included: Andorra, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, China, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mexico, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Uruguay.

### **1.4.1 Creation of a global academic network for reintegration**

In 2021, to support and complement the work of the Global Coalition and further enhance the collaboration with academia, the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict convened an Academic Advisory Group on Child Reintegration (AAG) (later called the Reintegration Research Group) to engage the global academic community in supporting child reintegration efforts in conflict-affected countries by identifying and working on a research agenda to further knowledge about the issue. The ambition was that the AAG would help fill the knowledge gap between practical needs in the field and academic research that could inform good practices.

In fact, the AAG resulted from a consultation in the Summer 2019 with members of academia, the UN and NGOs, during which it became clear that a mutual synergy between policy and practice could be enhanced with a dedicated study group examining the key aspects of and issues surrounding child reintegration.

The AAG was co-chaired by a troika composed of Ms. Sharon Riggle, OSRSG CAAC, Ms. Laura Perez of Fordham University, New York, and Mr. Alpaslan Özerdem, George Mason University, Virginia.

In the course of meetings between 2021 and 2022, five themes were identified for further research: i) Reintegration, resilience, and prevention of re-recruitment; ii) Physical and mental recovery; iii) Gender approach and inclusiveness; iv) Justice, human rights and accountability and v) Meaningful engagement of children and youth in transitions.

Five chairs from academia were identified to lead the working groups and were given general outlines of both the issue and ideas for areas of further research. The now Reintegration Research Group was furthered aided by an offer from Princeton University's Liechtenstein Institute for Self-Determination to provide five young researchers to work with the SRSR's office on first drafts of the papers. The work on the papers is ongoing, with the LISD taking on a greater role[9].

## **1.4.2 Consultations**

### **1.4.2.1 With former CAAFAGs**

#### **Hunter College meeting, 11-12 June 2019**

With the financial support of the Republic of Korea and to inform ongoing research work on reintegration commissioned by the Global Coalition, OSRSG CAAC in cooperation with UNICEF organized a two-day consultation with former CAFAAGs. The consultation was held at Hunter College, New York in June 2019. Three former CAFAAGs from Sierra Leone and South Sudan were part of the initiative and shared their views, experiences and reflections on the gaps and needs of child reintegration as former recipients of such programs to inform priorities for better and more sustainable programming. One CAAFAG spoke of living in “peaceful suffering” in the sense of dealing with unmet needs in silence which reminded of the importance of mental health to be incorporated in all aspects of reintegration. The CAAFAG also stressed that “what you give to children today, they will give it back to society tomorrow”.

[9] At the time of writing, the academic network transformed into a partnership between the SRSR CAAC and Princeton University. Two research papers on aspects related to Gender and Reintegration and Accountability and Reintegration are under development within the partnership, under Princeton's leadership

This comment also reminded earlier observations on the importance to position reintegration as a strategic investment for sustaining peace and development.

During the discussions, the CAAFAGs underlined the importance to be aware of 'structures', their meaning and importance in reintegration, from the "structures" of an armed group which was described as "addictive" to the power of such "structures" often replicated in cantonment or transit centres, while new structures must be established as CAAFAGs return to civilian life and need to also reintegrate and find their place in family and community structures. It was deemed important to recall that all layers of child protection must be supported and activated, from the individual level through community to national system building levels. In order to achieve this, it was contemplated that child reintegration must get out of the "humanitarian box" to be reframed as a continuum beyond the humanitarian realm through the HDP nexus. While the first 3 to 12 months are clear in focusing on the immediate needs of children, strategies and systems must be strengthened beyond that time frame in order to fully accompany the children in their reinsertion into society.

### **1.4.2.2 With NGOs and academia**

#### **Columbia University meeting, 25–26 June 2019**

Complementing earlier consultations with CAFAAGs, this meeting brought together NGOs and academia at Columbia University, New York, to share experiences and perspectives on ways to articulate and put forward child reintegration as a shrewd investment and compelling case for donors and Member States, using metrics to inform about the scale of the issue and the necessity to break silos in past approaches and invest across the HDP nexus in view of long-term peace and stability.

The ability to go beyond a siloed approach that has prevailed for long and conceptualize child reintegration across the HDP nexus and as a key and impactful contributor to peace and security was acknowledged as crucial. Identifying innovative sources of funding was discussed acknowledging that bilateral or multilateral donors were not always well-positioned to support grassroot and community-led projects. It was noted that the changing nature of warfare, increasing focus on counterterrorism and the 'securitization' of juvenile justice were major challenges and that it was key to counter such growing narratives and re-focus on the children's and communities' experiences. Discussions and recommendations from the workshop informed research carried out subsequently are under the "Financing Innovation Forum".

### **1.4.2.3 Wilton Park conference [15–17 February 2023]**

A Wilton Park event dedicated to the ‘Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups’ was organized on 15–17 February 2023, as an outcome of an April 2022 Wilton Park event entitled, ‘Preparing the children and armed conflict agenda for the future’. During the latter, it was posited that the release and provision of adequate reintegration support for conflict-affected children was a critical response to child recruitment and use and to better protect the rights and needs of these children. In fact, the reintegration of CAAFAGs was identified as a key continuing challenge to be addressed more holistically, especially in the context of an ongoing practice around the world.

The Wilton Park event focused on reintegration brought together policymakers, practitioners, member states and civil society to examine synergies and promote closer collaboration between the existing range of activities by various actors in the child reintegration space and agree on a key set of actions to enhance cooperation and accelerate progress in the reintegration agenda, by inter alia identifying time-bound actions.

Several themes were examined and highlighted the importance to make the case for child reintegration by building the evidence necessary to adequately inform policy and programming, bridging the HDP nexus for unified work for sustainable, successful reintegration, exploring ways to promote sustainable funding while acknowledging the centrality of children as rights-holders and ensuring their voices were listened to.

Participants agreed to create space for sharing best practices and challenges, breaking down existing siloes, and working together across the humanitarian, development and peace sectors. For example, the idea of metamessaging was presented as a way to bring the three sectors of the Nexus together under a common framework for and understanding of reintegration.

## **1.4.3 The 3 papers and their recommendations to improve support to child reintegration**

### **1.4.3.1 Summary of findings and recommendations**

Through the 12-month research process, the Global Coalition was able to identify the main gaps and needs in child reintegration funding and programming.

This resulted in the publication of three briefing papers in 2020, whose recommendations focused on new modalities and mechanisms for child reintegration to ensure long-term and sustainable funding for this strategic post-conflict intervention:

- ▼ Gaps and Needs for the Successful Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups or Armed Forces.
- ▼ Reframing Child Reintegration from Humanitarian Action to Development, Prevention, Peacebuilding and Beyond.
- ▼ Financing Support for Child Reintegration Issues and Options Study.

These papers outlined key recommendations focusing on new modalities and mechanisms for child reintegration to ensure long-term and sustainable funding for this strategic post-conflict intervention. The papers were launched during an event in July 2021 attended by 90 Member States and by United Nations representatives, academics and civil society[10]. A Summary of findings is also available on the OSRSG-CAAC website[11].



[10] The event can be watched on the OSRSG-CAAC website: Virtual Side Event: Launch of Child Reintegration Research Findings

[11] Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

## The papers made the following key overarching recommendations:

Promote child reintegration as the shared responsibility of multiple stakeholders across sectors and across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus

Make reintegration support available to children for a minimum of 3-5 years per child, based on the needs of the child and his or her family and community

Build programming around one coherent framework with measurement tools and indicators that can be used across the HDP continuum

Conduct research and generate evidence-based field level to show which interventions in support of child reintegration are most effective and warrant further investment

Fund community-based reintegration programming that can address children's needs in the medium- to longer-term, and that span the HDPN continuum seamlessly

Leverage existing funding mechanisms to achieve results, and create new mechanisms as required

Ensure access to reintegration support for boys and girls without discrimination





### **1.4.3.2 Paper 1: Gaps and Needs for the Successful Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups or Armed Forces**

The paper considers the barriers that hinder children's successful reintegration. Two significant constraints emerged. First, programmatic constraints that result from the complexity of reintegration, its multisectoral, ever-changing and long-term nature, and the political and structural challenges that impeded the effective implementation of reintegration programs. Second, child reintegration programming faces a financing crisis with funding for reintegration decreasing over the years despite an increasing proliferation in conflicts. This means that children and families in need are less and less able to count on predictable support, less likely to receive the specific services they require and benefit from sustainable peace and stability in their communities. The paper found that an approach is needed that strongly encourages the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups without any conditions and ensure access to reintegration support for all children without any form of discrimination. A cardinal premise is that children's reintegration is grounded in the fact that children are survivors of human rights violations and should be treated as such.



## KEY FINDINGS



- To continue good practice and support sustainable reintegration most effectively, any child reintegration program must commence with a multi-dimensional risk analysis and specifically consider any pre-existing gender dynamics and power dynamics.
- Community-level leadership and ownership are critical, with donors directly funding local organizations and institutions for reintegration support whenever possible. If not possible, implementing agencies should engage local structures and community leaders as early as possible and prepare them to accompany the process and for an eventual handover.
- Children, their peers, families and communities should be called upon to help design interventions and define metrics of success in reintegration.
- Community-based child protection case management systems should address the individual needs of children with protection concerns, including survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

### **1.4.3.3 Paper 2: Reframing Child Reintegration from Humanitarian Action to Development, Prevention, Peacebuilding and Beyond**

This second paper considers the centrality of child protection to sustainable development, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and to mitigate drivers of conflict, reduce risk and strengthen the resilience of individuals and societies. The paper highlights that the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups should be situated within a better funded, longer-term, more sustainable approach, by a wider range of stakeholders across the HDP nexus, with particular emphasis on communication and coordination, having a common understanding of what ‘success’ means for child reintegration, and establishing common metrics to measure it.

By reframing child reintegration, one recognizes the important contribution of successful child reintegration to achieving the SDGs and reciprocally, of the contribution the SDG achievements can make to child reintegration. Both elements reinforce the ability of conflict-affected countries to be resilient and to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict in the future. The paper explores how affected children could be better support to fully realize their rights as agents of change and champions for social and economic development.



## KEY FINDINGS



- Reframing reintegration recognizes that children and young people are a force for change and renewal, with the potential to make positive contributions to society and galvanize processes for development and peace.
- All 17 SDGs relate in some ways to children and are relevant to CAAFAGs. SDGs provide for a harmonized way of working so that interventions not only meet the needs of those affected but also reduce future risks and vulnerabilities.
- Child reintegration programming calls for a defining of a common theory of change for child reintegration, whereby multiple stakeholders across sectors and across the HDP strengthen the mechanisms required to commit, cooperate and coordinate so that humanitarian response and more development-oriented approaches coexist as a seamless continuum.
- Reframing reintegration posits the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the overarching framework and entry point to address some of the shortcomings of current child reintegration programs. It has a long-term horizon, an integrated, comprehensive and holistic approach, and is predicated on ‘leaving no one behind’ by addressing some of the main drivers of child recruitment.

### 1.4.3.4 Paper 3: Financing Support for Child Reintegration Issues and Options Study

This third paper identifies many sources and types of existing and possible funding and financing streams for child reintegration, mapping these instruments in different contexts across the HDP nexus. It explores overall trends with a focus on country situations on the CAAC agenda and as reported in the 2019 report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/73/907-S/2019-509). It puts forward a typology of funding contexts in situations of armed conflict to aid the analysis. The paper has three objectives: i) map existing funding and financing flows for child reintegration; ii) identify and introduce innovative modalities and iii) present options, benefits and drawbacks of funding and financing mechanisms and modalities for the future.



## KEY FINDINGS



- A variety of funding instruments are used to support child reintegration including UN core funding, bilateral funds, thematic funds, pooled or basket funds, thematic projects and national budgets. Some successful programs draw on multiple sources which has enabled implementers to creatively ensure a continuity of programming across the HDP nexus. In other cases, a similar approach has exacerbated the lack of coherence in reintegration efforts and created unbridgeable gaps in securing programs resources.
- Tracking actual levels of expenditure for reintegration has proven difficult in practice as existing funding codes and indicators do not always capture or describe the full extent of activities.
- New approaches and instruments have emerged through private sector and philanthropic foundations, and pooled funding has become a significant source of program support. The paper looked at the utility of these and the potential for scale up.
- Funding gaps are at times caused by institutional disconnects in financial support associated with the HDP nexus which draws on money from different funding pillars. This impacts the ability of implementers to provide the recommended continuum of care for the children in need.
- There are significant gaps in systematic and predictable reintegration funding across sectors. Short-term funding in certain situations generates additional risks by occasionally triggering inappropriate and/or unsustainable responses. In some circumstances, this could undermine rather than support service provision over the long-term.

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- There are significant gaps in systematic and predictable reintegration funding across sectors. Short-term funding in certain situations generates additional risks by occasionally triggering inappropriate and/or unsustainable responses. In some circumstances, this could undermine rather than support service provision over the long-term.
- Effective programs need to be able to have a degree of predictability and interconnectedness across the HDP nexus to make the desired and necessary impact on the children. Multi-year and predictable funding crucially allow for the development of relationships at program level between the stakeholders, including enhancing national ownership and capacity-building.
- More funding alone is not enough and reintegration funding should be flexible and promote individualized care approaches that anticipate the different needs of each child while still being grounded in community-based approaches so that the entire community sees value in reintegrating the children. Therefore, funding should be guaranteed for the duration of reintegration needs for the average child prior to commencing the support, recognizing that short-term funding can often generate additional risks.

The paper outlines five main options for financing modalities moving forward, taking into account the operating circumstances and typologies in which programs might be seeking to raise and manage finance. The options explored include potential modifications and amendments to existing mechanisms as well as potential new instruments and approaches. The identification and mitigation of potential risks is also identified as a critical consideration in the development of financing mechanisms and instruments and inappropriate or poorly coordinated or sequenced funding may undermine stabilization efforts

## **1.5 The Financing Innovation Forum**

The in-depth consultations with global experts, which resulted in the three above-mentioned research papers highlighted that reintegration support for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups had been severely hindered by limited and inflexible funding. Funding has been both insufficient in volume and narrow in scope, failing to address the broad range of sectors needed or bridge the HDP nexus. In the context of post-conflict recovery, development, and peacebuilding, the Global Coalition operated on the premise that supporting child reintegration was a strategic intervention that could benefit all stakeholders committed to reducing and preventing conflict. Reintegration was considered as a shared opportunity to achieve collective outcomes. The working assumption was that helping children who have exited armed forces and groups involved not only providing immediate support but also gradually shifting responsibility to national counterparts, while decreasing reliance on external donor funding over time. Prevention has been central in this paradigm: the successful reintegration of children is vital to achieving the SDGs and to the long-term prosperity and peace of conflict-affected societies.

To advance a contemporary vision of child reintegration, a new paradigm was considered necessary to shift away from short-term, donor-driven funding models to a more sustainable, long-term financing approach. Such an approach must be anchored at the national and regional levels, with core engagement from national governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and local communities.

This shifting approach, combined with recommendations from the financing briefing paper, led to the establishment of the **Financing Innovation Forum** ('Forum'), designed to bring together a diverse range of financial and funding entities. This includes regional development banks, bilateral donors, international organizations, the private sector, and community-driven initiatives, all with a focus on financing innovative ideas for child reintegration.



The Forum aims to promote a more sustainable approach by facilitating the exchange of information on existing and emerging financing modalities that could support the reintegration of former CAAFAGs. It also provides a platform to discuss challenges and gaps in the current system and explores ways to create new mechanisms or modalities to improve effectiveness.

The Forum's ambition is to establish a collaborative partner architecture through evidence-based advocacy, with the goal of increasing both the volume and diversity of funding options for children and communities affected by armed conflict. It seeks to build on existing funding mechanisms at the national and local levels, making them more effective, and wherever possible, incorporate local solutions and practices. Additionally, the Forum focuses on identifying and exploring new, innovative approaches, which included engaging private sector stakeholders and exploring non-traditional funding pathways.

A key principle of the Forum is to encourage government and local ownership and leadership, with a focus on reducing external support over time. This included identifying a wide range of funding modalities that involve government contributions and investment, ensuring a more sustainable and locally driven approach to child reintegration.





## **II. The Nairobi Process #LetThemSpeak**



## 2.1. Stakeholders leading the way

The Nairobi Process was established in 2021 to facilitate consultations among the CAAFAG, to provide them with a new platform for discussion, and to present their ideas and recommendations to decision-makers in the UN, African Union, donors, NGOs and others with influence over reintegration projects. It brought together reintegration national NGOs of countries on or formerly on the CAAC agenda with the objective to bring the voices and opinions of the children affected by conflict, particularly those who had been associated with armed forces or armed groups, to the international policy forums where actions could be taken to assist future victims of conflict. This project was a stakeholders-led initiative for which OSRSG-CAAC acted as a guarantor. Its unique aspect was to bring to the forefront the experience-informed opinions from the participants regarding reintegration programming and related matters through local-based and nationally owned consultations by the partners.

The national NGOs were based in more than 10 countries in Africa, South America, and Asia. With a general set of guidelines and recommendations, they conducted their own consultations with former CAFAAG (over 18 of age) and shared their findings with the group. It is important to note that none of the national NGOs received funding to participate in this process. They took part because they wanted to make sure their young people's experiences were heard globally.



# List of stakeholders

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## AFRICA

- **Burkina Faso** – L'association pour l'Unité de la Jeunesse et le Développement en Afrique (UNIJED Afrique)
- **Cameroon** – Centre for Community Regeneration and Development (CCREAD-Cameroon)
- **Central African Republic** – Birds of Peace
- **Chad** – House of Africa
- **Cote d'Ivoire** – Action for the Protection of Human Rights (APDH)
- **Democratic Republic of the Congo** – Bureau pour le Volontariat au service de l'Enfance et de la Santé (BVES); Coopérative des Personnes Victimes de Guerre des Grands Lacs (CPVGGL); Laissez L'Afrique Vivre (LAV);
- **Liberia** – African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPCCAN)
- **Mali** – Association des Femmes pour les Initiatives de Paix (AFIP)
- **Niger** – Association Nigérienne pour le Traitement de la Délinquance et la Prévention du Crime (ANTD)
- **Nigeria** – Children and Young People Living for Peace (CYLP); Grow Strong Foundation (GSF)
- **Somalia** – African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect in Somalia (ANPCCAN-SOM)
- **South Sudan** – Group of four child protection activists working for international and national NGOs, and community leaders
- **Uganda** – Children of Peace; Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative (WPDI)

## ASIA

- **Sri Lanka** – Child Rehabilitation Centre

## SOUTH AMERICA

- **Colombia** – Coalicion contra la vinculacion de ninos, ninas (COALICO)

Regular meetings between OSRSG-CAAC and partners were held during the course of almost 24 months. Upon joining the network, the organizations were asked to organize consultations and focus-group discussions with former CAAFAGs to collect their testimonies as to what they would have wished to see happening when they got into a reintegration program, if at all. Partners were also encouraged to document their work in a manner ensuring the confidentiality and safety of personal information and of individuals.

## **2.2. Local and national consultations**

Organizations who joined the Nairobi Process organized local consultations, referred to as “national consultations” with CAAFAGs, communities and other stakeholders. It was understood that they would lead the dialogues on their own behalf and use their existing capacities. It was also agreed that they would interview only individuals who had reached 18 years of age. The purpose of these consultations was to hear first-hand from the children and/or young adults about their story as former CAAFAGs and collect information about their reintegration experiences. The objective was to gather a candid overview of their opinions as primary beneficiaries and sources on what worked well and what was missing or could be improved, from real-life experiences. Where and when former CAAFAG could not be interviewed directly or were unable or unwilling to respond to a question, it was agreed that family members, relatives, a caregiver or a teacher with the knowledge and understanding of the child’s experience and needs, could be interviewed instead. The partners were encouraged to conduct dialogues with a diverse and inclusive representation of stakeholders in order to include the views from all relevant groups, regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, linguistic or cultural status, disability and other factors. As the lead in their own national consultation process, the partners were left to organize the consultations and set up their timeline, with OSRSG-CAAC as a resource for technical support or guidance, and as the guarantor of the process. In a spirit of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building, OSRSG CAAC encouraged the partners to contact each other in the face of challenges or to simply share experiences and best practices, as well as exchange on cross-border and regional issues.

Accordingly, a survey was developed collaboratively to ensure the standardization of methodology to collect data and information. The survey was validated by all partners and subsequently used for the dialogues. A set of ‘Guidelines and Principles’ was also collaboratively developed alongside five core values of **Representativeness; Comprehensiveness; Inclusivity; Meaningful participation; Do No Harm**, under the overall and paramount principle to prioritize the impartiality and independence of the process based on direct, not externally influenced recommendations from CAAFAG.

## **Representativeness**

Wherever possible, partners were encouraged to consult with as many diverse groups of CAAFAG as possible and seek information from or about the most marginalized and vulnerable amongst former CAAFAG. Three most vulnerable groups were identified, namely disabled children, children afflicted with albinism, and LGBTIQ+ children; however, the partners were encouraged to identify other vulnerable groups according to their context.

## **Comprehensiveness**

All opinions were welcomed regardless the age and exit date from the armed forces or armed groups. Context-specific information was also encouraged to better understand the needs of the children at that time, and consulting on contextual aspects with community members for example was encouraged.

## **Inclusivity**

It was understood as making an appropriate assessment to include hard-to-reach CAAFAGs such as members of minority or marginalized groups, refugee and displaced persons, children heads of households, those with who may find themselves living and/or working in the streets, girls who may have married in the meantime. Discussions among partners were encouraged to overcome challenges in reaching some of these groups.

## **Meaningful participation**

It was understood that dialogues had to be made as accessible as possible to CAAFAGs not speaking national but local languages and where relevant sign language to enable meaningful engagement by the CAAFAGs. Care by the partners must be taken to ensure the accuracy and quality of the input from the dialogues and make sure that nothing was lost in translation.



## Do no harm

Do No Harm was understood as the key guiding principle, namely by ensuring that no participants to the dialogues were put at risk for themselves, their families or community. All information and data were anonymized, personal information kept confidential and it was agreed that no information could be traced back to a single individual, a group or a community. Trauma-related considerations and the mental health of participants were also crucial to consider before engaging with anyone, with immediately stopping the process and referring anyone to appropriate mental health care if related issues were arising during a dialogue.



Therefore, a mapping of available services prior to consultations was encouraged. In this context, it was important to inform participants in a clear and understandable manner about the goal of the process (seeking expertise and not gathering the stories; study purpose and not provision of services).

It was understood and agreed by all partners that the interviewees had to be at least 18 years of age and that their consent was a necessary pre-condition to start a dialogue. It was also understood that fact-based information on the process and purpose of the interview and collection of information was another pre-requisite to holding the dialogue so as to not raise expectations from the part of the interviewee.

Throughout 2022 and beginning of 2023, consultations were held locally by the partners. In countries with more than one partner, all contributing organizations were requested to coordinate to avoid duplication. The organizations carried out careful planning prior to the dialogues, in line with the 'Guidelines and Principles', and developed their own strategies to reach out to CAAFAGs. Most reported having engaged with local authorities and at times local security entities prior to conducting the consultations in an effort of transparency, to collect their views, to get access and necessary authorizations to travel to specific areas. In some contexts, consultations were organized in collaboration with the authorities as in Colombia, where COALICO organized dialogues in conjunction with the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-repetition which has used and incorporated some of the outcomes in its final report published in June 2022[12]. In the DRC, partners engaged with representatives of the Programme National-DDR who supported the initiative and expressed interest in the outcome while in Uganda, representatives of the local administration were also consulted as a specific stakeholder. Organizations in the DRC put their networks of partners at the project's disposal which enabled the outreach and resulted in greater numbers of former CAAFAGs to be interviewed. In Sierra Leone, partners stressed the importance of community leaders' participation while in Liberia, traditional leaders participated in the dialogues. In Nigeria, partners used technology to reach out to stakeholders in remote areas. In line with the 'Guidelines and Principles', specific groups were targeted and for example in the DRC, girls' participation was highlighted and translated in seven dialogues out of 21 which focused on girls. In Uganda, partners made extra efforts to include the voices of refugees from the DRC and South Sudan and informed in person all levels of government up to the Prime Minister's office to ensure they had unfettered access.

[12] Commission for the Clarification of Truth, for Coexistence and Non-Repetition (Truth Commission), Final Report, Chapter on Girls, Boys and Adolescents in the Armed Conflict (Informe Final, "Hay Futuro Si Hay Verdad", No es un Mal menor. Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes en el Conflicto Armado), August 2022, available at: <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/no-es-un-mal-menor>

Overall, consultations engaged participants from the age of 18 with the major bulk of the former CAAFAGs interviewed being young adults at the moment of the project. Organizing and conducting the consultations was not always seamless and some partners faced multiple challenges in doing so. Security and access to remote or conflict-affected areas was a significant challenge to reaching a diverse group of CAAFAGs living in marginalized, insecure or remote areas. For example, in Burkina Faso, Chad, the DRC and Mali, security was a key factor to consider while planning and executing the dialogues. In Burkina Faso, partners highlighted that it had been difficult to consult with some CAAFAG for security reasons, including as some were still living in areas designated as high risk, and under the do no harm principle, preferred to switch instead to a community approach. In Chad's Lake Chad region, the proximity of Boko Haram rendered the exercise perilous and could have put the CAAFAGs at risk of re-recruitment. The organization then preferred to hold off and switch to a different methodology. Other challenges were met by partners. For example, in South Sudan, they were confronted with a scarcity of stakeholders engaged in reintegration and a difficulty to identify former CAAFAG. In the DRC, population displacement complicated partner's identification and access to CAAFAG. A number of organizations shared that former CAAFAG had declined to participate fearing their re-stigmatization in the communities or to be re-recruited. Finally, in one situation marked by a heavy counterterrorism climate, some partners raised the fear they had encountered by some former CAAFAG who had been associated with armed groups designated as 'terrorist'.

The outcome of the consultations was then anticipated to be presented and endorsed at a Symposium, conceived as the culmination of the Process, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya. The Symposium was envisaged to be a platform to provide the opportunity for the stakeholders and former CAAFAGs to present the findings and recommendations of the consultations to decision-makers in the UN, African Union, donors, NGOs and others with influence over reintegration projects, and hence, bring more voices to the discussion.

### **2.3. Steering Committee meeting, Nairobi, March 2023**

The Nairobi Process held a four-day in-person meeting of the Steering Committee, in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2023, to plan the symposium and chart out activities and next steps. Inter alia, the objectives of the meeting were to discuss further planning, logistics and needs to hold the Symposium as well as the expected outcomes, fundraising strategies and the logistics of its organization. In addition, members wanted to discuss the development of an Action Plan to be presented and adopted at the Symposium for the implementation of former CAAFAGs' recommendations.

Some 20 partners from the Nairobi Process participated in the meeting, during which it was agreed that (i) a fundraising strategy for the organization of the Symposium would be developed; (ii) the list of recommendations from CAAFAGs would be re-organized around thematic issues and streamlined; (iii) the creation of a Group of Friends of the Nairobi Process would be sought; (iv) a Nairobi Process secretariat, independent from OSRSG-CAAC, would be established and TORs would be drafted and; (v) a compendium of proposed pilot projects to be funded by donors/participants in the Symposium which would form the basis for the implementation of the former CAAFAGs recommendations.



## **2.1. Voices of stakeholders: the recommendations**

The primary objective of the Nairobi Process was to collect and use input directly from CAAFAGs and other key stakeholders to inform future reintegration initiatives, and to provide a future group that the international community and national policymakers could continue to consult. Some 200 recommendations were formulated by the partners as a result of the national consultations with the CAAFAG. These recommendations were discussed during the March 2023 meeting of the Steering Group in Nairobi with the objective to have them shared broadly to inform all actors in the reintegration field of work, including policymakers and donors during the Symposium.

As part of reviewing the recommendations, the partners identified and ranked the top three in the form of recommendations to 1. International/Regional stakeholders; 2. National stakeholders; 3. Local stakeholders.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

## Working Group 1

- ✓ Sustainable reintegration programs for CAAFAG should ensure coordination, information and data sharing, transparency, accountability and collaboration among reintegration stakeholders (state and non-state actors, governments, civil society and humanitarian actors at all stages of reintegration (conceptualization, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation).
- ✓ Reintegration programs should encourage direct, local, individual as well as collective, financial and support mechanisms in the CAAFAG sustainable reintegration process.
- ✓ Reintegration programs should be supported by policy and programs on justice for CAAFAG and their communities, peace education and peacebuilding, protection of human rights and the environment and be part of a strategy for international, regional and cross-border cooperation, where appropriate.

## Working Group 2

- ✓ Apply an inclusive and positive approach that facilitates access to reintegration for former CAAFAG taking into account the specific cultures exposed to risk, discrimination and exclusion.
- ✓ Protect the cultural identity of the CAAFAG and take it into account throughout the reintegration process with respect for cultures, traditions and beliefs. Identify the best ways to include education that takes into account the cultural and political contexts.
- ✓ Eliminate the judgmental approach to the aspirations and opinions of CAAFAG.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

## Working Group 3

- ✓ Provide trainings that prepare to cope with today's living and equal the chances for CAAFAG to succeed in personal and professional life (including new technologies, information about economic transformation in a country, innovations, etc.) to mitigate the shortages resulting from long-term separation from the society and development.
- ✓ Provide former CAAFAG in need, including those who suffered irreparable physical or psychological consequences (preventing them from entering the employment field temporarily or permanently), with basic minimum income and complete with special financial assistance when needed, including for CAAFAG with disabilities.
- ✓ Identify, prepare, and equip well all reintegration stakeholders supporting the return of CAAFAG back to civilian life. This implies building local capacities in long-term throughout the strengthening of the responses of civil society organizations (CSO) and local organizations; considering children, families and communities as the primary beneficiaries/participants in the projects financed by international agencies of cooperation; and invest in long term projects that go beyond the line of emergency and aim at development and peace building in the affected regions to overcome structural causes of recruitment and other affectations.

## Working Group 4

- ✓ Allocate specific funds in national and local budgets for child reintegration, independent from international funding and ensure transparency and accountability in reintegration financing, implementation and digital inclusion. In this context, support States to ensure political neutrality and equal access to reintegration and influence the countries to include the reintegration in national and local budgets.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

- ✓ Support networking of reintegration providers, engage regional organizations, enable local communities to co-decide on development priorities that inform economic and social reintegration and create enabling environments for former CAFAAG to respond to current justice and security related concerns, notwithstanding their age and status.
- ✓ Carry out impartial and unbiased research where needed, expand ways of documentation of abuses against CAAFAAG, ensure transparency of public policies and activities, engage CSOs, the private sector and the whole of the society, making use of different already accessible funding including those designated for peace and reconciliation. Support accountability, assessment, sharing information, specify sources of funding, how policies interconnect, hold governments accountable with regard to international and regional commitments and legal frameworks, provide comprehensive approach, looking at how the national legislation and policies are formulated.

## Working Group 5

- ✓ Cooperate with international human rights and justice mechanisms and observe legal and political commitments
- ✓ Include child reintegration in international agendas and funding mechanisms, and train and assist NGOs in accessing funding.
- ✓ Complement justice proceedings with political engagement to shed light on the complexity of child recruitment in a given context, to reach a common understanding and goals, and to set up appropriate national, regional, and local measures to implement reintegration and prevention.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

## Working Group 1

- ✓ Develop a formal and inclusive participatory Operational Framework (stakeholder inclusion; gender inclusion, social inclusion, disability inclusion, HIV-AIDS affected persons inclusion and survivors of sexual violence) for the prevention of recruitment, that includes disarmament, demobilization and inclusive and community-based sustainable reintegration of CAAFAG. This Framework should seek beforehand, on the basis of a global assessment of the context (legal framework for the protection of the child, stakeholders, needs, with specific attention to girls, socio-family-community opportunities and reception infrastructure, proactive identification of CAAFAG, identification of existing initiatives, analysis of the security and political context, etc.) to formulate a Policy and a Sustainable Reintegration Program for CAAFAG in the country. Prevention of recruitment and/or re-recruitment of children is an important cross-cutting activity to support the CAAFAG Sustainable Reintegration Program. To this end, as far as possible, identify, establish and develop institutional links, financial and societal reintegration of children with peace processes, transitional justice and other initiatives.
- ✓ The Sustainable Reintegration Program for CAAFAG should fundamentally, in its design, development and in its implementation actively involve host communities or communities of origin of the beneficiary children.
- ✓ The CAAFAG Sustainable Reintegration Programme should be monitored and evaluated periodically and encourage innovative projects.

## Working Group 2

- ✓ Use different psychosocial approaches to raise awareness and support CAAFAG's meaningful (effective) engagement in the community.
- ✓ Develop community engagement and confidence-building strategies to adequately train in the social reintegration process of CAAFAG.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS



Conduct awareness-raising campaigns on the risks and dangers associated with the recruitment of children into armed forces and groups.

## Working Group 3



Use appropriate and proportionate measures of safety and security for CAAFAG returning to communities in full respect for human rights and aiming at empowering those children and young people. Also, provide safety and security for families at risk and organizations working on the ground.



Release residential and cultivation lands if occupied by the military and expedite general demilitarization and demining of territories to ensure child protection services for children affected by the conflict, including psychosocial support, community-based support and social infrastructure.



Ensure cooperation between government sectors and practical cooperation between relevant ministries (including but not limited to those responsible for education, health, justice, social affairs) to facilitate inclusiveness of the process and ensure sustained political will.

## Working Group 4



Allocate specific funds in national and local budgets for child reintegration independent from international funding.



Engage different stakeholders, review eligibility criteria and align with principles of equality, non-discrimination, inclusion and political neutrality and establish trust of CAAFAG and communities with their authorities.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS



Continue/ensure free access to quality education, include psychosocial class in school curriculum, support and engage the health care and justice system, promote fair work conditions and formal contracts or creation of their own business for CAAFAG including vocational trainings, apprenticeship, or other forms of professional and economic insertions.

## Working Group 5



Plan and implement children reintegration and DDR operational frameworks in synergy and systematically updated to adapt reciprocally and to reflect current contexts of children and adult formerly and currently associated with armed groups and armed forces.



Where needed, establish decentralized rehabilitation/transition centers for all victims of war on the entire territory of an affected country and train and assist NGOs in accessing funding.



Gather information about relevant standards and inform and engage with relevant national entities (such as Child Rights Commissions, military, ministries.) in discussion on implementation in the reintegration context and ensure synergy with international human rights mechanisms

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

## Working Group 1

- ✓ The CAAFAG Sustainable Reintegration Programme should ensure coordination, information and data sharing, transparency, accountability and collaboration among reintegration stakeholders (state and non-state actors, governments, civil society and humanitarian actors at all stages of reintegration (conceptualization, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- ✓ The CAAFAG Sustainable Reintegration Programme should build the capacities, including adequate tools, of stakeholders, families, CAAFAGs, teachers, professional trainers, health providers (including mental health), media and social workers, in the Operational Framework for Prevention and DDR for Children (CAAFAG). The CAAFAG Sustainable Reintegration Programme should, in addition, encourage or support exchanges and communication between the CAAFAG and enable them to express themselves freely and share their experiences and recommendations at local, regional and international levels, as well as between the different actors in the sustainable reintegration of the CAAFAG. It should also listen frequently to the CAAFAG: their positive or negative criticism will help guide the implementation of the Projects in the future.
- ✓ The CAAFAG Sustainable Reintegration Programme should support the resilience mechanism of other children at risk in areas affected by armed conflict and particularly among displaced children, migrants, street children and children in detention.

## Working Group 2

- ✓ Encourage the participation of host communities in the reintegration of children.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

- ✓ Establish family reunification mechanisms with the best interests of children in mind.
- ✓ Set up support centers for CAAFAG to benefit from institutional mechanisms (administrative, legal), psychological support, and access help and assistance in family reunification.

### Working Group 3

- ✓ Build capacities, prepare CAAFAG for reuniting with family, and ensure continuous support and guidance to CAAFAG and families (i.e. counselling and follow-up visits) throughout the process and continue the support beyond the age of legal majority and advise the CAAFAG on possible transition or cease of some forms of assistance when appropriate.
- ✓ Prioritize CAAFAG meaningful participation in rebuilding war-torn communities, restoring their confidence and ownership to enhance social acceptance and empowerment.
- ✓ Identify and address specific needs of CAAFAG girls, including married girls, mothers and pregnant women. Also, ensure for girls the same level of independence (incl. financial) as for boys and adapt the support to their situation (i.e. when mothers/parents). Safe and decent housing is one of the prerequisites. Ensure that girls and women are not stigmatized thereby removing the burden of shame.

### Working Group 4

- ✓ Exchange information and best practices, lessons learnt by establishing trust with CAAFAG and communities towards authorities including justice and political systems. Include elements of educational services, engage the private sector, the media, security services, education premises, families and traditional leaders.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

- ✓ Lead proper evaluation of all cost, establish programmatic and policy collaboration, improved process of identification and vetting of CAAFAG and enable local communities to co-decide on development priorities that inform economic and social reintegration. Expand ways of documentation of abuses against CAAFAG (include audio and visual recording of the individual survivors' testimonies, visit to rehabilitation centers and home caregivers, interview social workers, volunteers who worked and counselled the survivors, engage the UN, Government, and international bodies like: International Criminal Court (ICC), European Union, African Union, cultural and religious institutions, as well as local and national) and record their health, psycho-social and economic status.
- ✓ Identify, support and engage educational, health care functions in all schools currently being used by the military.

### Working Group 5

- ✓ Document the child rights abuses and crimes that occurred against CAAFAG as it contributes to individual recovery, accountability, prevention, national reconciliation, and to the peace process in a given context. For that end, launch an immediate investigation to establish the whereabouts of all children who were recruited, including those who are now over 18 years of age and whose fate remains unknown.
- ✓ Evaluate, with meaningful participation of the community and CAAFAG, the socio-economic possibilities and opportunities in a given family, community or/and region and adapt the socio-economic support programs accordingly.
- ✓ Identify, create, and apply innovative solutions to reintegration when appropriate and engage former CAAFAG in future reintegration programs, also by supporting them in accessing public sector employment.



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### **III. What's next?**

The stakeholders who led the Nairobi Process decided to create a formal entity in the form of an international NGO named “COALITION FOR CHILD REINTEGRATION INTERNATIONAL”, to carry the work forward. It is envisioned that the group will continue to share best practices and that it will expand to include new entities from other conflict-affected countries and co-fundraise for reintegration projects. Their ambition is to transition into a “go to destination” and platform for information and contacts for those wishing to get in touch with NGOs working directly with former CAAFAGs for the purpose of reintegration [13].

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As the DSG pointed out, efforts must redouble to bridge the humanitarian-peacebuilding-development nexus and ensure that children do not fall between the cracks of this nexus [14].

The SDGs are a primary vehicle to improve outcomes for these children and provide sustained and sustainable systems change to enhance child protection in the countries where there is conflict. In the same vein, the Pact of the Future adopted in September 2024 offers a renewed commitment to deliver to these children, who are agents of change and promoters to peace, security and sustainable development, the reintegration services they deserve to grow and contribute to a prosperous, equitable and inclusive society.

{13} Owing to capacity gap at OSRSG CAAC and the constrained financial environment the envisioned Symposium could not take place

{14} Improving Support to Child Reintegration, Summary of the findings from three reports, Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers, Preface by the Deputy Secretary General, February 2020, Improving-Support-to-Child-Reintegration.pdf

# PACT FOR THE FUTURE



## Action 7

We will strengthen our efforts to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms.

## Action 34

We will invest in the social and economic development of children and young people so that they can reach their full potential.

## Action 35

We will promote, protect and respect the human rights of all young people and foster social inclusion and reintegration.

# ANNEX

This annex contains the full and comprehensive list of recommendations made by former children associated with armed forces and armed groups- 200 in total, during the consultations organized by the Nairobi Process' stakeholders.

The recommendations are regrouped under themes. Editing has been kept minimal to preserve authenticity of the recommendations. All credit goes to the stakeholders of the Nairobi Process who organized and led the local consultations.

## CAAFAGs Recommendations from the Nairobi Process

### Capacity Building and Good Practices

1. Exchange information and share good practices between countries and regions.
2. Gather information about relevant standards and inform and engage with relevant national entities (such as Child Rights Commissions, military, ministries...) in discussion on implementation in the reintegration context and ensure synergy with international human rights mechanisms.
3. Facilitate the creation of former CAAFAG discussion platforms at the local, regional and international level.
4. Seek the capacity building for CAAFAG, families, and affected communities that increase their participation in reintegration before, during, and after the release of a child from armed groups/forces.
5. Provide capacity building trainings that prepare CAAFAG to cope with today's living and equal the chances to succeed in personal and professional life (including new technology, information about economic transformation in a country, innovations, etc.) to mitigate the shortages resulting from long-term separation from the society and its economic development.
6. Support capacity building of civil society organizations (i.e. in CAAFAG active listening techniques).

### Regional and Cross-border Cooperation

7. Strengthen regional/transborder cooperation in child reintegration and in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and other interconnected issues, such as fighting light arms trafficking.
8. Where groups have crossed national borders, regional cooperation within the framework of a cross-border program is relevant to meet the challenges of society and reintegration of children.

### Funding



9. Include in international agendas and international funding the child reintegration.
10. Provide immediate reintegration support to CAAFAG and, for that, timely assess the needs, prepare communities, identify stakeholders, and ensure funding and infrastructure even before the signing of handover protocols or anticipated ad hoc separation of children from armed groups and/or forces.
11. Properly fund the reintegration and ensure sufficient and sustainable funding adapted to the needs of CAAFAG and communities.
12. Provide direct and locally based financial mechanisms and support.
13. Train and assist NGOs in accessing funding.
14. Allocate specific funds in national and local budgets for child reintegrating, independent from international funding.
15. Make use of different already accessible funding, including those destined for peace and reconciliation.
16. Protect the funding assigned for reintegration and ensure transparency and fight corruption in financing and implementing reintegration programs.
17. Ensure financial and digital inclusion.
18. Engage private sector and government and local administration's institutions in providing and organizing provision of financial support.
19. Train and assist NGOs in accessing funding.

## DDR

20. Plan and implement children reintegration and DDR operational frameworks in synergy and systematically updated to adapt reciprocally and to reflect current contexts of children and adult formerly and currently associated with armed groups and armed forces.
21. Define global guidelines on standardized management of reintegration of CAAFAG, perhaps taking further the international DDR standards for children as was just updated.
22. Release residential and cultivation lands occupied by the military and expedite general demilitarization and demining of territories to ensure child protection services for children affected by the conflict, including psychosocial support, community-based support and social infrastructure.
23. Demilitarize reintegration process and social relations in conflict affected and post-conflict countries.

## Reintegration Guidelines and Programs

24. Work out specific guidelines on how to gather the resources for reintegration
25. Ensure access to continuous guidance throughout their time in the program and continue the support beyond the age of legal majority and advise the CAAFAG on possible transition or cease of some forms of assistance when appropriate.
26. Help CAAFAG to confirm their identity and age, and to obtain documents.
27. Review the eligibility criteria for reintegration and align with the principles of equality, non-discrimination, inclusiveness, and political neutrality.
28. Proactively identify CAAFAG, also in difficult to reach areas and contexts (IDPs, migrant population, children in detention) and estimate their number to efficiently plan and provide them with reintegration support.
29. Carry out impartial and unbiased research where needed to determine the exact numbers of ex-CAAFAG.
30. Work out specific guidelines on how to gather the resources for reintegration.
31. Set up criteria for successful reintegration.
32. Avoid short-term reintegration projects.
33. Place reintegration centers in safe zones.
34. Guarantee in reintegration programs differential approaches to age, gender, diverse sexual orientation, ethnicity, territory, culture, and economic status of origin.
35. Ask about and evaluate needs of a released child prior to propose and/or apply a specific reintegration plan.
36. Discuss in a comprehensive and inclusive manner the state of the on-going reintegration. Based on this evaluation foresee security and other developments that can affect the reintegration and make every effort to mitigate those risks (including climate driven).
37. Plan individually tailored phase-out programs and mechanisms.
38. Engage former CAAFAG in the identification of those still in captivity or in need of reintegration support.

#### Advocacy and Human Rights

39. Ensure equal enjoyment of human rights (also civic and economic) for CAAFAG without discrimination, including freedom of movement, access to justice, protection of data and private life, access to land ownership and heritage, and issuance of all identity documents, including birth certificates.
40. Respect rights to privacy of all the engaged people (CAAFAG and family).
41. Inform and educate CAAFAG about their rights and ways to defend themselves and to pursue justice from the very beginning (especially while they share their testimonies) and provide support throughout the process.
42. Identify and mitigate hate speech against (former) CAAFAG.

43. Popularize international conventions against child abuse in conflict and strengthen the skills of actors and CAAFAG themselves in accountability mechanisms and prevention of sexual abuse.
44. Inform CAAFAG about their civic and economic rights and responsibilities.
45. Integrate peace, human rights, and justice education in school curricula for the community and CAAFAG to improve the understanding of the context in which reintegration is led, its aims, and positive impact on the individual, communal, and international levels.
46. Educate and train CAAFAG in active leadership, peace studies, and transition from childhood to adulthood.
47. Listen to CAAFAG and support their peaceful initiatives.
48. Educate media providers on “do no harm principles” as well as on reasons and objectives of the child reintegration.
49. Communicate widely about general preventing impact of the reintegration (prevention against recruitment, re-recruitment, re-emergence of conflicts, violent behavior).
50. Communicate about the reintegration and reintegration programs in locally understandable language.
51. Support CAAFAG’ safe and peaceful associative initiatives.

#### Governance and Legal Framework

52. Ensure and sustain political support (including from traditional leaders and other formal and informal holders of power) for reintegration.
53. Ensure cooperation between government sectors and practical cooperation between relevant ministries (including but not limited to those responsible for education, health, justice, social affairs) to facilitate inclusiveness of the process and ensure sustained political will.
54. Ensure transparency of the government policies and activities and engage the civil society.
55. Design, advocate for, and implement legislative changes to create long term institutional frameworks for child reintegration and child protection and generate political drive to implement them. Establish new and reform the existing national and local institutions to ensure implementation of reintegration and prevention projects.
56. Advocate for better laws and their implementation aimed at prevention of child recruitment.
57. Support the States that implement child reintegration in fighting corruption and other malfunctions that impede the reintegration efforts.
58. Include the reintegration in development strategies.

59. Educate security services members (including police) how to protect civilian and reintegrating population.

#### Justice and Accountability

60. Eliminate detention of children and ensure their rights in the justice system.

61. Create accessible and inclusive access to justice for CAAFAG and ensure free judicial, administrative, and legal advice.

62. Expand ways of documentation of abuses against CAAFAG (include audio and visual recording of the individual survivors' testimonies, visit to rehabilitation centers and home care givers, interview social workers, volunteers who worked and counselled the survivors, engage the UN, governments, and international bodies like: International Criminal Court, European Union, African Union, cultural and religious institutions, as well as local and national) and record their health, psycho-social and economic status. Ensure security of educators, justice system officers and other engaged in education processes (especially where armed groups still remain active).

63. Strengthen the skills and knowledge of victims and communities on international conventions and law relating to the rights of the child, even in times of war.

64. Consider possible resentment and sought for justice while informing adequately about the reintegration process.

65. Engage justice system in reintegration efforts to properly address the phenomenon of child association with armed groups/forces to treat all the children primary as victims, and to identify the crimes committed, such as recruitment and use, torture, sexual abuses, child labor (including in illegal mining), killing and maiming, other war crimes or genocide.

66. Prosecute crimes committed by the armed groups, bring justice to child victims, and ensure adequate reparations.

67. Investigate the abuses committed against children and held accountable the perpetrators, notwithstanding the party to conflict that they were or still are affiliated to.

68. Complement the justice proceeding with political engagement to shed the light on the complexity of child recruitment in each context, to reach a common understating and goals, and to set up appropriate national, regional, and local measures to implement reintegration and prevention.

69. Establish trust of CAAFAG and communities towards authorities, including its justice and political systems.

70. Document the child rights abuses and crimes that occurred against CAAFAG as it contributes to individual recovery, accountability, prevention, national reconciliation, and to the peace process in each context. For that end, launch an immediate investigation to establish the whereabouts of all children who were recruited, including those who are now over 18 years of age and whose fate remains unknown.
71. Cooperate with international human rights and justice mechanism and observe legal and political commitments.
72. Ensure that access to justice for CAAFAG and justice for the community are granted and actively sought from the very beginning of the process of reintegration.
73. Create enabling environments for former CAAFAG to respond to current justice and security related concerns, notwithstanding their age and status.

### Access to Services

74. Expedite the vacating of and fully restoration the educational and health-care functions of all schools and health-care facilities that have been used by the military.
75. Ensure security of reintegration service providers.
76. Ensure security of educators, justice system officers and other engaged in education processes (especially where armed groups still remain active).
77. Ensure effective and accessible health care, including psychologic and psychiatric services, as well as physical therapy and treatment of addictions.
78. Continue the educational support through high education.
79. Provide former CAAFAG in need, including those who suffered irreparable physical or psychological consequences preventing them from entering the employment field temporarily or permanently, with basic minimum income and complement it with special financial assistance when needed, including for CAAFAG with disabilities.
80. Lead proper evaluation of all the costs of schooling and/or other educational service and provide required financial support to cover those additional expenses (including transport, food, fees, educational materials, etc.).
81. Identify, support, and engage health care facilities in reintegration efforts.
82. Equip the health services premises.
83. Support community based social and mental health workers.
84. Organize psychosocial activities that include CAAFAG and those who were not associated with armed groups/forces.
85. Perform individual household assessment, including mental state, health state, housing, clothing, nutrition, schooling, access to income generation projects and other.

86. Provide basic services, including access to quality food, health care, and improve conditions of living, including decent housing. It also covers give immediately clothing and footwear and personal effects like, beddings, toiletries.
87. Conduct physical and mental health needs assessment and address identified issues (such as need for surgery, mistrust of CAAFAG towards their peers and adults, need for rehabilitation and physical therapy).
88. Support networking of reintegration providers.
89. Ensure access to religious and traditional practices as part of the mental and spiritual healing.
90. Include in schools' daily curricula psychosocial focused classes and support.
91. Include trauma-healing and "mental disarmament" in the psychosocial support.
92. Provide scholarships to CAAFAG pursuing studies under reintegration programs.
93. Promote, establish, and support time-limited care services as alternative or/and preparative measures for family unification (among other foster families).
94. Design and implement programs and mechanisms specific for urban and rural areas.
95. Educate and capacitate care providers in physical and digital protection and security.
96. Perform individual household assessment, including mental state, health state, housing, clothing, nutrition, schooling, access to income generation projects and other.
97. Include mentorship development programs, and effective extra curriculum activities.
98. Ensure free access to quality education (including fair and appropriate salaries for teachers and care givers, building and/or renovating schools), including informal education where appropriate.
99. Include elements of educational services and prospects in all the reintegration programming. Inform about and prioritize provision of education services to ensure that a reintegrating person receives at least elementary education and literacy and numeracy knowledge.
100. Educate families on child development and mental health.
101. Ensure follow-up on the situation of children released, on reintegration activities and their beneficiaries and grant the follow-up support to the initial reintegration activities and services.
102. Apply innovative solutions to child reintegration when appropriate.
103. Provide scholarships to CAAFAG pursuing studies under reintegration programs.

Post-Conflict Situation



- 104. Lead reintegration also in post-conflict contexts, especially if there was no support established in the past.
- 105. Plan and develop a comprehensive post-conflict action plan for children that comprehensively addresses outstanding protection and psychosocial issues, with a focus on various groups of children with special needs, including, but not limited to, former children associated with armed forces and groups, formerly displaced children and children who have lost one or both parents in the conflict.
- 106. Enable CAAFAG to understand the on-going or past conflict in context of which they become victims of child recruitment, and inform and engage communities, including CAAFAG, in peace process (whether formal or informal).
- 107. Support already existing initiatives engaging children and young people, including woman-led and youth-led initiatives, in conflict affected and post-conflict countries as part of community-led and inclusive reintegration.
- 108. Work on child reintegration in synergy with the peace process bearing in mind that only sustainable peace will create conditions for complete elimination of child recruitment and continued risk of their re-recruitment.
- 109. Seek peaceful conflict resolution measures between the armed groups and governments that comprise child reintegration issues.

#### Stakeholders

- 110. Identify, prepare, and well equip all the stakeholders of the reintegration of CAAFAG back to civilian life.
- 111. Engage diverse group of stakeholders to contribute from the very beginning of designing and planning and consider this a prerequisite to put in place any kind of reintegration support.
- 112. Engage security services, education premises, families, media, and traditional leaders in providing CAAFAG with adequate information and support in seeking justice. Provide the above-mentioned stakeholders with capacity building where necessary.
- 113. Incorporate key recommendations from CAAFAG (and stakeholders) into future projects and programs.
- 114. Co-create new opportunities (talents, scholarships) with stakeholders and donors.
- 115. Share or distribute the Nairobi Process Final Report of CAAFAG recommendations (and other stakeholders).
- 116. Support networking of reintegration providers.

117. Educate families, teachers, care providers, and other stakeholders on the challenges related to reintegration and provide them with adequate tools to mitigate the risks such as stigmatization and challenges related to different attitudes, capacities, and level of engagement of reintegrating children.
118. Encourage to and support the reintegration providers and other non-government organization in adhering to a code of conduct that would protect children rights.
119. Encourage some NGOs to specialize in comprehensive and inclusive reintegration support to be provided to all the children affected by conflict. Those NGOs should be supported by nationally and internationally to ensure synergy and efficiency.
120. Ensure transparency, information sharing, and collaboration between reintegration stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, government, civil society, and humanitarian actors from conceptualization, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
121. Establish programmatic and policy collaboration between national entities, other reintegration stakeholders, including CAAFAG communities, donors, and civil society organizations and international organizations.

#### Community and Family Engagement

122. Include reconciliation within the community as an inherent part of reintegration programming and seek and show evidence in what way the reintegration CAAFAG contributes to the community reconciliation and wealth to improve acceptance for reintegration.
123. Establish and support existing local, community owned means of communication (incl. radio) and share former CAAFAG testimonies to encourage other to leave an armed group and join reintegration programs.
124. Address tensions and unresolved communities' grievances and apply other measures to prevent re-emergence of violent conflict.
125. Help CAAFAG find, connect with, and maintain constant contact with their families, and for that support safe usage of on-line tools where needed.
126. Facilitate the family reunification and assist children in their consent for the reunion with the family members in respect to the best interest of a child.
127. Engage and support the community that a child will reintegrate with, including members of the families, and traditional leaders.
128. Better assess family role, as healing element but also for potential factors that can disturb reintegration or push for recruitment.
129. Engage hosting communities, including those that are different than communities of origin.

130. Engage families and communities in identification of CAAFAG.
131. Work with families and evaluate their positive/negative role in the context of recruitment and reintegration in order to take informed and participative decisions on support family reunification.
132. Engage family in the planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating processes and elevate family as major reintegration stakeholder.
133. Build the capacities, prepare CAAFAG for reuniting with family, and ensure continuous support to CAAFAG and families (i.e. counselling and follow-up visits) throughout the process.
134. Establish a climate of intergenerational courtesy during community activities, ensure that all community members are included and respected.
135. Evaluate, with meaningful participation of the community and of CAAFAG, the socio-economic possibilities and opportunities in a given family, community or/and region and adapt the socio-economic support programs accordingly.
136. Engage in reintegration and support already existing community organizations, such as development communities, youth clubs, children clubs, women associations, etc.
137. Lead general community campaigns and educate and engage with other children in the community on the recruitment, reintegration, and prevention, and address their fears and apprehension towards children coming back to the community.
138. Strategize community engagement and trust building.
139. Employ different ways of communication and expression, such as art, to raise awareness and support meaningful engagement of CAAFAG in the community.
140. Assist and enable community to identify common objectives of community-driven reintegration.
141. Provide in-kind support, in parallel to adequate funding, to community led organizations and initiatives.
142. Work with the community members on their responsibility and roles in protecting children.
143. Gather information and analyze family situation to better engage CAAFAG and the family.
144. Enable local communities to co-decide on development priorities that inform economic and social reintegration.
145. Open opportunities for political reintegration and grant other forms of participation in community decision-making processes as it is of particular importance for stabilization and failing to do so can encourage further rebellion and raise vulnerability for re-recruitment.

146. Support community led reunification and communication between CAAFAG and the members of the community before released children join the village. Increase meaningful participation and ownership of the process by letting the community invite the former CAAFAG to come back and agree on the steps to follow and the modalities in a way that all parties feel safe, welcomed, and reassured.
147. Gather information and analyze family situation to better engage CAAFAG and the family.
148. Prioritize CAAFAG meaningful participation in rebuilding war-torn communities, restoring their confidence and ownership to enhance social acceptance and empowerment.
149. Assess the risks and provide CAAFAG with information about possible challenges related to reintegration and coming back to communities. Address these challenges and provide adequate assistance to those reintegrating.
150. Improve processes of identification and vetting of CAAFAG, among other by engaging communities' leaders.
151. Include all the society sectors and groups and choose appropriate way of information sharing and provision, also employing verbal and non-verbal communication.
152. Use appropriate and proportionate measures of safety and security when CAAFAG return to communities in full respect for human rights and aiming at empowering those children and young people.
153. Improve processes of identification and vetting of CAAFAG, among other by engaging communities' leaders.
154. Give opportunities to participate in rebuilding the society aimed at building the ownership of the process.

#### Economic Empowerment

155. Gather information and analyze family situation to better engage CAAFAG and the family.
156. Enable local communities to co-decide on development priorities that inform economic and social reintegration.
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## Economic Empowerment

- 167 Provide former CAAFAG in need, including those who suffered irreparable physical or psychological consequences preventing them from entering the employment field temporarily or permanently, with basic minimum income and complement it with special financial assistance when needed, including for CAAFAG with disabilities.
168. Engage private sector and government and local administration's institutions in providing and organizing provision of financial support.
169. Promote and support financial education on how to create and save capital and start income-generating activity.
170. Engage former CAAFAG in future reintegration programs, also by supporting them in accessing public sector employment.
171. Adapt the reintegration support to the existing possibilities and opportunities of a given socio-economical community's context.

172. Evaluate, with meaningful participation of the community and of CAAFAG, the socio-economic possibilities and opportunities in a given family, community or/and region and adapt the socio-economic support programs accordingly.
173. Directly (co-)finance youth-led initiatives as part of reintegration process.
174. Conduct aptitude evaluation and market needs assessment prior to invite to enroll for specific reintegration program.
175. Assist in acceding and promote fair work conditions and formal contracts or creation of their own business for CAAFAG concluding vocational trainings, apprenticeships, or other forms of professional and economic insertion.

#### Gender

176. Identify and address specific needs of CAAFAG girls, including married girls, mothers, and pregnant women.
177. Ensure for girls the same level of independence (including financial) as for boys and adapt the support to their situation (i.e. when mothers). Safe and decent housing is one of the prerequisites.
178. Ensure privacy and separate space for girls and boys where needed and adequate.
179. The mental health of CAAFAG women is almost ignored while most of them were victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. There is therefore an urgent need to set up prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) committees to facilitate the reporting of cases.
180. Ensure privacy and separate space for girls and boys where needed and adequate.

#### Complaint Mechanisms

181. Develop case reporting mechanisms and referral processes to ensure incidents are reported in a way that can best assist the victims of sexual exploitation.
182. Establish a transparent and efficient complaint mechanisms for CAAFAG who have suffered abuses.
183. Listen to and help CAAFAG to understand what they have gone through as victims and survivors of conflict related violations of their rights (that may include forcible witnessing or committing crimes).



184. There needs to be more support to females and males who have suffered from sexual exploitation while in armed groups or forces. Training is needed for staff of agencies on the PSEA theme and the sharing of awareness kits and information.

#### Culture

185. Understand, respect, consider, and include tradition and culture environment and practices in reintegration for the best interest of children.

186. Protect the cultural identity of CAAFAG and consider it throughout the reintegration process. Respect culture, traditions, and beliefs of a reintegrating person, and identify the best ways to include peace education in respect to a given cultural context.

187. Communicate with CAAFAG in respectful, age-adapted, and understandable way and language. Explain all the reintegration process stages. Engage in two-ways communication to identify aims, timeframe, and programming of the reintegration support.

188. Teach children intercultural communication and respect.

189. Study, acknowledge, and consider tradition and local characteristics in reintegration programming in each national, local, as well as regional context.

190. Acknowledge the healing effect of reunite with the family, friends, and native community, traditions, and culture and protect these family and culture ties where appropriate given the best interest of a child and her/his decisions.

191. Apply a positive and inclusive approach that facilitates the access for specific tribes and cultures in risk of discrimination and exclusion.

#### International and Regional Cooperation

192. Support exchange between CAAFAG and let them share their experience and recommendations on local, regional, and international level.

193. Include the reintegration of CAAFAG as part of the global, regional and national development and peace agenda and sustain it a political priority. For that, where possible, identify, establish, and develop institutional, financial, and societal connections of child reintegration with the peace processes, transitional justice, and other initiatives.

194. Plan and implement children reintegration and DDR operational frameworks in synergy and systematically updated to adapt reciprocally and to reflect current contexts of children and adult formerly and currently associated with armed groups and armed forces.

195. Engage regional organizations.

Others

196. Consider the prevention of use and abuse of children (including recruitment) by armed groups and forces as an inherent component and one of the objectives of the reintegration program.

197. Eliminate judgmental approach to CAAFAG aspirations and opinions.

198. Adapt the level of responsibility put on a child to their development and individual capacities.

199. Where needed, establish decentralized rehabilitation centers for all the victims of the war on the entire territory of an affected country.

200. Adapt the level of responsibility put on a child to their development and individual capacities



Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for  
**CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

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