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REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN SIERRA LEONE

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund, DG/DCHA under Contract #DFD-M-00-04-00238 with Manila Consulting Group, Inc. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

**REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS
IN SIERRA LEONE**

John Williamson

January 31 - February 9, 2005

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund and I wish to express appreciation to Christine Sheckler, Abdulai Jalloh, and Edward Benya of USAID/Freetown and to Donald Robertshaw of UNICEF Sierra Leone for their efforts to facilitate the visit to Sierra Leone and their active involvement in it. Thanks are also due to Mr. Christof Kurz of the International Rescue Committee who arranged field visits in Kono. Many children and adults made themselves available to provide information and answer questions as did personnel of the Government of Sierra Leone, UNICEF, and numerous nongovernmental organizations. Their contributions were extremely helpful and are very much appreciated.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| CWC | Child Welfare Committees |
| DCOF | Displaced Children and Orphans Fund |
| IRC | International Rescue Committee |
| NGO | nongovernmental organization |
| UNAIDS | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 1999 and 2004, the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) provided over \$6.7 million to support projects for war-affected children in Sierra Leone. DCOF's senior technical advisor visited Sierra Leone from January 31 to February 9, 2005 to (1) review results and lessons learned from the two most recent grants and, (2) considering these results and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) *Fragile States Strategy*,¹ explore with the USAID mission whether there are critical priorities for the social and economic integration of children and adolescents that additional DCOF funding could effectively address over the next three to five years.

One of the most impoverished countries in the world, Sierra Leone has experienced years of armed conflict, during which large numbers of children were displaced, killed, abducted, or forced to become part of various fighting forces. The country devolved to "failed state" classification, but has since progressed to fragile state status. Yet despite its significant natural resources and potential for agricultural development, the country's continued progress toward peace and security remains precarious. The following table reflects significant elements of the country's transition from war to peace.

Sierra Leone's Transition from War to Peace

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Start of war | 3/91 |
| Most recent disarmament and demobilization period | 1/01 – 1/02 |
| Boys below 18 years demobilized (number) | 4,269 |
| Girls below 18 years demobilized | 274 |
| Male adults demobilized | 40,765 |
| Female adults demobilized | 2,920 |
| <i>Total demobilized</i> | <i>48,228</i> |

Source: National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

During the most recent disarmament period, more than 48,000 children were demobilized. Ninety-eight percent of these children were reunited with parents, close family members, or relatives, although some have subsequently migrated to other areas. Yet despite the fact that large numbers of girls were abducted and brought into the conflict, only 8 percent of the children demobilized in Sierra Leone are female. This issue was explored in a 2002 DCOF report.* DCOF has supported UNICEF and International Rescue Committee (IRC) projects to identify such girls and assist them in returning home.

The future stability of Sierra Leone likely depends on whether the large majority of youth who were involved in and affected by the conflict will find access to education, skills training, and employment—and, ultimately, reintegration into the social, political, and

* http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/pubs/report1st.html

economic mainstream. The net primary school enrollment rate in Sierra Leone is estimated to be about 45 percent—similar to the pre-war level, but far short of the goal of education for all.

Both the UNICEF and IRC projects had closed by the time of the February 2005 DCOF visit described in this report; the visit focused primarily on identifying lessons learned and areas that future DCOF funding might address in Sierra Leone. Based on document reviews, interviews, group discussions, and site visits during this trip, it appears that both projects were effectively implemented. The following tables provide an overview of results achieved.

Results of the UNICEF Girls Left Behind Project

| Service | <i>Beneficiaries</i> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Family tracing | 494 |
| Family reunification | 424 |
| Skills training | 493 |
| Income generating activities | 155 |
| School | 36 |
| Counseling | 714 |

Results of the Reintegration of Children Affected by War Project (For the Period of Extended Funding, July 2000 -April 2003)

| Service | <i>Beneficiaries</i> |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Separated girls and boys identified and documented | 406 |
| Children reunified with their families | 380 |
| Alternative care placements | 63 |
| Children in alternative care subsequently reunified | 38 |
| Children placed in school | 742 |
| Children placed in skills training | 308 |
| Follow-up visits conducted (number of visits) | 1713 |
| Children placed in income-generating activities | 79 |
| Child Welfare Committees formed, trained, and actively functioning | 56 |
| Youth clubs formed and supported (number of clubs) | 84 |

Source: "Reintegration of War-affected Children and Adolescents in Sierra Leone, 1 May 2000 - 30 June 2004: Final Report to USAID/DCOF," IRC Sierra Leone.

FINDINGS, OBSERVATIONS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

While the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process in Sierra Leone benefited a substantial number of boys, relatively few of the estimated 8,600 to 11,400 girls who were abducted or otherwise associated with fighting forces were included in it.² Although the procedures established for the identification and demobilization of child soldiers did not require them to turn in a weapon, in practice it appears that many girls were turned away because they did not have one. Additionally, some girls were not allowed by their commanders or “bush husbands” to go through DDR, and many kept themselves out of the process out of fear or shame.

Of the 424 girls reunited with families under the Girls Left Behind project, some decided not to remain in their home community, largely due to the negative responses they received from community members. This happened more frequently in areas outside those where nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) had been able to sensitize communities prior to reunification efforts, thereby reducing stigmatization of returning girls. For those formerly abducted girls who decide not to remain with their parents or relatives, assisting them in re-establishing this contact will likely be beneficial over time, so that the girls are again connected to a family safety net.

The following were identified as elements critical to the successful reintegration of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone:

- Community sensitization
- Formal disarmament and demobilization
- A transition period in separate centers for boys and girls, located well away from adult DDR sites
- Tracing and family mediation
- Follow-up after a return to family/community, and extended monitoring for children not placed with their parents
- Traditional cleansing ceremonies, traditional healing, and religious support
- School or skills training of adequate quality and duration, coupled with literacy and numeracy instruction and the provision of tools, materials, and follow-up counseling
- Ongoing access to health care, particularly for war-related conditions affecting young people in school or training
- Individual supportive counseling, facilitation, and encouragement.

The majority of reunified children appear to have reintegrated well and are not significantly different from other children. UNICEF anticipates that by August 2005, follow-up monitoring will have reduced the caseload requiring ongoing attention to approximately 280; these young people will need to be referred to an agency with more sophisticated capacity to address psychosocial needs.

For future DDR efforts targeting all child soldiers, both boys and girls, this report recommends consideration of the following lessons learned from the process to date in Sierra Leone.

- There should be a subsequent point of entry into the process, not dependent on the action of the commanders, for those who managed to go home directly or were not allowed to go through the DDR process.
- Separate interim care centers for boys and girls should be established.
- Centers for children should be located far from cantonment sites for adults associated with fighting forces.
- Traditional healing and faith-based (Christian and Muslim) interventions were important to the psychological and physical recovery and social reintegration of young women who had suffered sexual abuse and violence.
- Literacy and numeracy training should be consistently provided in conjunction with skills training for youth who cannot read or perform basic math.
- Any selection of skill areas for training should be based on a careful market analysis carried out by an experienced researcher.
- Skills training courses should be of an adequate duration and intensity to enable trainees to learn and use marketable skills.
- Participation in skills training can facilitate community acceptance of former child soldiers, because it is seen as evidence of their commitment to a constructive role.
- Provisions need to be made for on-site child care, health screening and service, and careful attention to securing both a safe place to live and engagement in an economic activity after completion of training.
- Apprenticeship training requires careful planning and structured curriculum to achieve specific, measured levels of skills over a designated period of time; trainees' progress and safety should be monitored.

In addition, during this visit, DCOF staff identified several issues of concern that could not be explored in depth—specifically, sexual abuse and exploitation, children living on the streets, and children involved in mining.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a clear need in Sierra Leone to increase the access of children and youth to education, skills training, and livelihood opportunities. Maintaining and securing peace in the country very likely depends on increasing such opportunities in the near term, and sustaining them in the longer term. It remains unclear, however, whether DCOF funds could fill a specific niche within a larger strategy to accomplish this. A typical DCOF grant is on the order of \$1 million to \$1.5 million for three years. By itself, this level is insufficient to significantly impact young people's access to education, skills training,

and livelihood opportunities—both because of the magnitude of the need and because DCOF funding can only be used to benefit youth who are below eighteen years of age.

DCOF recommends that USAID/Freetown consult with other donors—including other offices within USAID, such as the Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau (DCHA) and other pillar bureaus—to determine whether one or more additional donors might have (significant) interest in participating in a serious, coordinated, multifaceted, youth program. In such a case, DCOF funds could be used to address a particular component, provided that the proposal makes a persuasive case that activities will have a measurable impact on the safety or well-being of especially vulnerable children under age eighteen.

Given the limited capacity of USAID/Freetown to manage an additional project, the most viable option for any additional DCOF funding would be to incorporate it into another existing project. The LINKS project appeared to be the most likely possibility. During the visit, several possible uses for additional DCOF funding to this project were discussed, including:

- Supporting community mobilization in LINKS project areas to improve the safety and well-being of the most vulnerable children
- Expanding the participation of adolescents below age eighteen in youth-livelihood components of the LINKS project
- Establishing a pool of funds that could be used in conjunction with elements of the LINKS project particularly to improve the safety or well-being of children.

The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund or its partner project, the Victims of Torture Fund, should consider whether it could provide some level of ongoing support to the relatively small caseload of reunited children manifesting significant ongoing difficulties with reintegration following the review anticipated in August 2005.

The following report provides further details on the data gathered during the February 2005 visit to Sierra Leone.

INTRODUCTION

The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund and Sierra Leone

Established in 1989 by an act of the United States Congress, the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) is administered by the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). DCOF is managed by Lloyd Feinberg and is supported by the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund, War Victims Fund, and Victims of Torture Fund Technical Support Contract managed by Manila Consulting Group, Inc. DCOF has evolved into a program that focuses on issues of loss and displacement among children in the developing world, primarily those affected by armed conflict and children living on the street. Its fundamental approaches are to enhance the capacity of families and communities to protect and care for their most vulnerable children, as well as strengthen children's own capacities to provide for their own needs. In keeping with DCOF's standard approach, "children" in this report are considered to be below eighteen years of age.

Between 1999 and 2004, DCOF provided over \$6.7 million to support projects for war-affected children in Sierra Leone. Grantees were the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Table 1
DCOF Funding History in Sierra Leone

| Grantee | Dates | Amount |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| UNICEF | 2/17/99 - 9/30/02 | \$2,250,000 |
| UNICEF | 9/24/02 - 3/31/04 | 750,000 |
| IRC | 7/28/00 - 6/30/04 | 2,140,347 |
| TOTAL | | \$5,140,347 |

DCOF sent its senior technical advisor, John Williamson, to Sierra Leone for the period January 31 to February 9, 2005 to (1) review results and lessons learned from the two most recent grants and, (2) considering these results and USAID's *Fragile States Strategy*,³ explore with the USAID mission whether there are critical priorities for social and economic integration of children and adolescents that additional DCOF funding could effectively address over the next three to five years. From Sierra Leone, Mr. Williamson continued to Liberia, where he addressed similar objectives. A list of key contacts during the Sierra Leone portion of the visit is included in Appendix D; key resource documents are listed in Appendix B.

Contextual Factors

The February 2005 visit to Sierra Leone followed up on issues raised by John Williamson and Lynne Cripe in their report, "Assessment of DCOF-supported Child Demobilization

and Reintegration Activities in Sierra Leone” (based on their May 2002 visit), and on observations made by Lloyd Feinberg during his February 2003 visit. The report on the 2002 visit includes a history of the conflict in Sierra Leone and discussion of its impacts on children, which are not included here (the report is available online at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/pubs/report1st.html).

This report supplements the previous report with updated information and further observations regarding the reintegration of former children soldiers and other separated children.

Sierra Leone and Liberia

Sierra Leone and neighboring Liberia are similar in many respects and the recent conflicts in the two countries were interrelated. DCOF has supported similar interventions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. For these reasons, this section briefly notes similarities and differences between the contexts and the conflicts in the two countries.

Similarities. Sierra Leone and Liberia are among the most impoverished countries in the world. Each experienced years of armed conflict and devolution to a failed state, followed by subsequent progress to the current status of fragile state. Maintaining this momentum—much less making further progress toward a relatively stable and secure democracy—is by no means assured. Rioting last November in Liberia and at the end of February 2005 in Freetown, Sierra Leone, clearly indicates that the peace in both countries is fragile. Sierra Leone’s mortality rate for children under age five is the worst in the world, and Liberia’s is the fifth worst.

In addition to impoverishment of large segments of their populations, Sierra Leone and Liberia also have in common significant natural resources and excellent agricultural potential in terms of arable land and rainfall.

Table 2
Statistical Comparisons of Sierra Leone and Liberia

| | Sierra Leone | Liberia |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Total population | 4,963,289* | 3,367,000 |
| Infant mortality rate | 166/1,000 | 157/1,000 |
| Under age 5 mortality rate | 284/1000 | 235/1000 |
| Gross national income per capita in 2003 | \$150 | \$130 |
| Male adult literacy rate in 2000 | 37% | 70% |
| Female adult literacy rate | 23% | 51% |
| Male net primary school enrollment | 43 | 59 |
| Female net primary school enrollment | 39 | 53 |

* Source: Statistic Sierra Leone, Provisional Results: 2004 Population and Housing Census
The State of the World’s Children 2005: Childhood Under Threat, New York, pp. 108- 124.

UNAIDS does not report on the adult HIV prevalence rate for Sierra Leone. A study carried out by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found a national prevalence rate of 0.9 percent, which was lower than anticipated, and recommended further testing.⁴ UNAIDS reports the HIV rate for Liberia as 5.9 percent (range: 2.7 to 12.4 percent).⁵

As noted above, war is another element the two countries have in common. For each, conflict has been a major contributing factor to levels of poverty and underdevelopment.

Table 3
Conflict Comparisons: Sierra Leone and Liberia

| | Sierra Leone* | Liberia** |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Start of war | March 1991 | December 1989 |
| Most recent disarmament and demobilization period | January 2001 – January 2002 | December 2003 – January 2005 |
| Boys below 18 years demobilized | 4,269 | 8,771 |
| Girls below 18 years demobilized | 274 | 2,511 |
| Male adults demobilized | 40,765 | 69,281 |
| Female adults demobilized | 2,920 | 22,456 |
| Total demobilized | 48,228 | 103,019 |

* Source: National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration.

** Source: National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration.

In both countries, children and youth have been significantly affected by armed conflict, with large numbers of children displaced, killed, abducted, or forced to become part of the fighting forces. Normal family life and children’s education have been disrupted, and most children were pushed more deeply into poverty. In fact, the conflicts were linked in a number of ways—the beginning of the war in Sierra Leone resulted directly from the support that forces loyal to then-warlord and now president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, provided to the Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Taylor’s regime derived significant resources from the sale of diamonds mined in Sierra Leone.

The origins of conflict in both countries share similar historical and economic patterns. Paul Richards has described the origins of the RUF and causes of the war in Sierra Leone in *Fighting for the Rainforest*.⁶ Shortly before my visit to the two countries in 2005, the report on a study Richards led in Liberia—*Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment*—was released.⁷ Each of these sources makes the case that the countries’ patrimonial social and economic structure, with “big men” in control of resources, has carried over into the political domain, resulting in the social and economic subservience of youth and their marginalization and alienation from mainstream society and political structures. There are direct implications of this analysis for building peace in both countries. The following statement from *Community Cohesion in Liberia* echoes similar points made regarding Sierra Leone in *Fighting for the Rainforest*:

The militias engaged in the Liberian conflict are “fed” by a large number of young people in the interior who are no longer able, or willing, to integrate within a traditional social system based on family land and social defense. Demobilizing the militias requires the provision of alternatives to returning to rural dependency. This implies major changes in institutional frameworks for rural social solidarity, as well as changes in the employment opportunity structure.⁸

The U.S. ambassadors with whom I met in each of the countries during the visit emphasized the relevance to building peace of ensuring ongoing opportunities for education, training, and livelihood opportunities for youth, and no one with whom I met expressed a contrary view. The future stability of both countries likely depends on whether the large majority of youth will find access to education, skills training, and employment. Youth with whom I met in both countries consistently stressed how highly they value these opportunities.

There were similarities to the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) process in the two countries. In Sierra Leone, 98 percent of children demobilized were reunited with parents, close family members, or relatives. In Liberia, where over 11,000 children were formally demobilized, 99 percent were reunited. Despite these high reunification figures, some reunited children in each country subsequently migrated to other areas, instead of reintegrating locally. This drift to other areas was likely influenced by the desire to find livelihood opportunities.

The capacity and potential of the youth with whom I met in Sierra Leone and Liberia was striking. Shortly before leaving Freetown, I met with members of the Children’s Forum Network of Sierra Leone. I explained that I would soon take part in a youth rally in Monrovia and asked whether there was any message that they would like for me to convey to Liberian youth at the rally. The chairman of the network said, “Tell them that the children of Sierra Leone love them. We are one family. It is only us that can make peace in the Mano River Basin. Stand strong, Work hard. Talk what you know.”

“Tell them that the children of Sierra Leone love them. We are one family. It is only us that can make peace in the Mano River Basin.”

This message was well-received by participants in the youth rally in Monrovia.

Differences. There have been significant differences for children in the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration processes in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In Sierra Leone, the demobilization process seems generally to have gone well for those who were able to go through it—but many formerly abducted girls, in particular, were largely excluded. Only 8 percent of the children demobilized in Sierra Leone were female, despite the large number of girls abducted. This issue was explored in the 2002 DCOF report, and the aim of providing opportunities for formerly abducted girls to return home led to DCOF’s funding of IRC and UNICEF projects to identify and assist as many of these girls left behind as possible.

In Liberia, demobilization of a total of 38,000 adults and children was planned, but 103,019 were disarmed and given cards identifying them as having been demobilized (and therefore eligible for support for reintegration), resulting in a major shortfall of resources for rehabilitation and reintegration. In contrast to Sierra Leone, 30 percent of more than 11,000 children demobilized in Liberia were girls.

The coordination among key actors in the DDR process in Sierra Leone was generally better than that in Liberia. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF has played a significant role in developing an effective Child Protection Network. The network has helped to coordinate tracing, family reunification, and respective DDR roles among nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, governmental structures, and peacekeeping forces. Despite UNICEF's efforts in Liberia, communication among counterpart bodies appears to have been (and remains) seriously constrained, resulting in less effective coordination of DDR.

An additional difference is that the ethnic dimensions of the conflict in Liberia are much sharper than those in Sierra Leone—with Mano, Gio, Mandingo, and Americo-Liberian ethnicity to some extent characterizing conflicting militias in Liberia.

The comparisons with Liberia offered above are intended to clarify the situation in Sierra Leone. The remainder of the report focuses on Sierra Leone.

Education and Training in Sierra Leone

The net primary school enrollment rate in Sierra Leone is estimated by UNICEF to be about 45 percent, which is similar to the pre-war level but far short of the goal of education for all. The Sierra Leonian government has officially abolished primary school fees, but local levies, while illegal, are still commonly used to cover school expenses and provide incentives for teachers to be in their classrooms. In addition to these fees, the costs of attending school include costs for uniforms, exercise books, and other supplies. Secondary education is much more expensive, with fees and other expenses totaling roughly \$100 per year.

In conversations and interviews, it was striking how highly children and youth in Sierra Leone value opportunities to go to school or to receive organized skills training. Young people who were not in school or training expressed their strong desire for such opportunities. Those who were in school noted a strong desire to continue their studies, clearly uncertain whether the resources would be available for this to happen.

Certainly, one dimension of this desire was that education and training offer a route to a better life—but being in school or formal training also seemed to influence how young people felt about themselves and how they were perceived by others in their community. For example, I met with a young man in Makeni, who had formerly been with one of the fighting forces and asked him about his experience in at interim care center following his disarmament and demobilization. His few weeks in the center, where non-formal classes were part of the program, were his first exposure to education. He described this

experience as “moving from darkness into the light.” In the last three years, he has passed the first six primary grades and desperately wants to continue his education.

Another young woman in Makeni—formerly associated with one of the fighting forces, but now enrolled in a skills training program for Caritas Makeni—noted that it was important to her that others in her community could see from her uniform that she is in a training program and wants to play a positive role in her community.

Do No Harm

While the primary focus of the visit was on demobilization and many of the children with whom I talked were former child soldiers, in keeping with the standard DCOF approach, I did not ask them to talk about their experiences during the war. To do so in a short interview and without provision of follow-up support would have been unethical. Instead, I focused on their experiences during and after the disarmament and demobilization process.

RETROSPECTIVE CONSIDERATION OF UNICEF AND IRC PROJECTS

Both of the UNICEF and IRC projects had closed by the time of the February visit; I therefore gave more time and attention to identifying lessons with potential future applicability to DCOF-funded projects and areas of need that DCOF funding might meet in Sierra Leone, rather than to retrospective review of project implementation. Based on the documents reviewed, interviews, group discussions, and site visits, it appears that UNICEF and its partners satisfactorily implemented the Girls Left Behind project.

I spent less time reviewing the implementation of the fourteen-month extension of the IRC project, because the key IRC staff members were no longer in the country at the time of my visit. However, the IRC personnel who were present were very helpful in providing information, arranging field visits, and making themselves available for discussions. From the information I was able to gather, it appears that IRC satisfactorily carried out its responsibilities during the extension (the final report on the longitudinal study has not yet been completed).

The UNICEF Girls Left Behind Program

The report on the 2002 DCOF visit to Sierra Leone recommended that “UNICEF should develop and submit to USAID/Sierra Leone and DCOF a proposal for the development and coordination of efforts to identify abducted children—in particular, girls—and to provide them opportunities to reunite with their families and reintegrate into their home communities.” DCOF subsequently provided \$750,000 to UNICEF for the period of September 24, 2002 to March 31, 2004 for the Girls Left Behind program. The objectives were:

- To identify and provide appropriate services to 1,000 girls and young women
- To trace the families of 65 percent of the identified girls and young women
- To strengthen the capacity of communities, government, and NGOs to prevent sexual violence and to meet the special needs of its victims
- To identify and publicize best practices that can contribute to more effective protection of children and women in future peace processes and DDR programs.

UNICEF, in turn, provided sub-grants to four NGOs to implement the program in the geographic areas indicated in the table below.

Table 4
UNICEF Partners in Girls Left Behind Project

| Organization | Area of Program Implementation |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| International Rescue Committee | Kono District |
| Caritas Makeni | Bombali District |
| COOPI | Port Loko District |

These organizations identified 1,014 girls and young women who, as children, were associated with fighting forces but who had not gone through the DDR process. Of these, the partner NGOs identified and registered 714 girls and young women and provided each of them at least one service.

Table 5
Girls Left Behind Project Results

| Service | Beneficiaries |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Family tracing | 494 |
| Family reunification | 424 |
| Skills training | 493 |
| Income generating activities | 155 |
| School | 36 |
| Counseling | 714 |

Of the girls and young women registered for the program, 220 were living with their parents at the time they were identified. Of those who were reunited either with immediate or extended family members, 159 remained only a short while before returning to the situation in which they had been living previously. It seems likely that others may have also left after the program closed.

The guidelines and standards that UNICEF and its partner organizations established for the Girls Left Behind Project are an important resource for future DDR processes. (They are included as Appendix E.)

The IRC Reintegration of War-Affected Children and Adolescents Project

DCOF provided the International Rescue Committee (IRC) \$1,590,571 to implement its Reintegration of War-Affected Children and Adolescents in Sierra Leone project for the period July 2000 through April 2003. DCOF provided an additional \$549,776 to extend the project for an additional fourteen months through June 2004.

The extension period of the project had the following objectives:

1. To continue to identify and reunify separated Sierra Leonean children with their families or to pursue alternative community-based living arrangements where necessary, with particular attention to abducted girls who remain separated from their families and other children associated with the fighting forces who were bypassed by the official demobilization process
2. To engage every child within the IRC caseload of direct beneficiaries in schooling, skills training, or other productive pursuit foundational to the reintegration process
3. To strengthen communities' ability to receive returning children and to provide sustainable protection and care through the mobilization of Child Welfare Committees (CWC) and support to a range of community reintegration projects
4. To involve children and adolescents as meaningful stakeholders in community life by encouraging participation in positive, self-generated initiatives and community-based psychosocial activities that encourage peace-building and social reintegration
5. To support peace-building by providing psychosocial support to children and assisting communities to work through conflicts that may arise during and after their interaction with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and/or the Special Court for Sierra Leone
6. To further the global understanding of factors related to positive psychosocial adjustment among former child soldiers and to better assess the impact of interventions aimed at bringing about successful community reintegration, conduct a longitudinal study to measure the adjustment of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone

Selected indicators that IRC reported for this segment of the project are included in the following table.

Table 6
IRC Extension Period Results

| Service | Beneficiaries |
|--|----------------------|
| Separated girls and boys identified and documented | 406 |
| Children reunified with their families | 380 |
| Alternative care placements | 63 |
| Children in alternative care subsequently reunified | 38 |
| Children placed in school | 742 |
| Children placed in skills training | 308 |
| Follow-up visits conducted | 1713 |
| Children in income-generating activities | 79 |
| Children in adult literacy courses | 13 |
| Number of Child Welfare Committees formed, trained, and actively functioning | 56 |
| Number of youth clubs formed and supported | 84 |
| Children assisted during or after TRC/Special Court involvement | 10 |

Source: "Reintegration of War-affected Children and Adolescents in Sierra Leone, 1 May 2000 - 30 June 2004: Final Report to USAID / DCOF," IRC Sierra Leone.

The figure of 380 reunified children includes 196 girls who were excluded from the formal DDR process. IRC also reported the latter figure to UNICEF and it is included in the reported total of 714 young women and girls registered and provided at least one service, as noted above. Regarding Objective 6 (above) the research has been completed and DCOF has reviewed the draft report on the qualitative portion of the longitudinal study.

FINDINGS, OBSERVATIONS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

This section presents observations that may be relevant to in the implementation of future DCOF-funded projects for children affected by armed conflict. It supplements the observations and key issues noted in the 2002 report, "Assessment of DCOF-Supported Child Demobilization and Reintegration Activities in Sierra Leone," available online at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/pubs/reportlst.html.⁹

This 2005 visit reinforced the following lessons from the 2002 report, which are relevant to other countries embarking on demobilization.

- Child soldiers include both combatants and non-combatants and both boys and girls. Political agreements and procedures for demobilization and reintegration must reflect this reality.
- Ongoing communication and advocacy is essential.
- It is important to recognize and give humanitarian attention to young adults (male and female) who were abducted or otherwise forced as children to become part of a combatant group.
- The training of peacekeepers or military observers must include specific attention to procedures and considerations regarding children.
- There are too many contingencies that arise during the course of a DDR process to specify in advance procedures to handle them all. Therefore, DDR procedures and training should allow for on-the-ground decision-making in keeping with key child protection and human rights principles and recognize the standing of UN and designated child protection NGOs as parties to such decision-making.
- Cultural and other constraints affect recognition by children associated with fighting forces that family reunification may be an option for them and their receptivity to it. Active communication efforts are needed to address these issues. Video and tape-recorded messages from former child soldiers who have successfully returned home can be useful tools in this process.¹⁰

The observations made during the 2005 visit are offered below, arranged according to four categories: girls and DDR, general observations regarding DDR, the reintegration caseload, and other issues of concern.

Girls and DDR

Restriction of Girls' Access to DDR

No one can say with certainty how many girls were abducted during Sierra Leone's civil war. The 2002 DCOF visit report notes that UNICEF documented 8,466 "missing children between 1991 and 2002, at least half of whom were girls. As reported in *Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War*, a study based on fifty in-depth interviews estimated that the total number of such girls associated with fighting forces was probably in the range of 8,600-11,400.¹¹

"In hindsight, the biggest crack in the DDR system was gender bias; too many girls and young women fell through and never received any benefits."
- UNICEF, *From Conflict to Hope*

Table 7 reflects how few girls were included in the DDR process.¹²

Table 7
Affiliation of Demobilized Child Soldiers

| RUF | | | | CDF | | | | Total* | | | |
|-------|------|--------|-----|-------|------|--------|-----|--------|------|--------|-----|
| Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | |
| # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 2,590 | 90.7 | 266 | 9.3 | 1,662 | 99.6 | 7 | 0.4 | 4,269 | 94.0 | 274 | 0.6 |

*Total includes 18 child combatants (17 male and 1 female) from the former Sierra Leone Army, Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, and other groups.

One UNICEF report observed that Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission "found that during the war, girls and women were targeted for sexual abuse, forced pregnancy, and trafficking, and many did not return home and were living in extreme poverty. Most of the abductees used as sex slaves have not been reintegrated into families and communities and continue to be subjected to hostility directed at them and their children."¹³

One of the most critical issues related to Sierra Leone DDR is why the number of girls and young women was as low as it was. Some of this may be due to the way the DDR process was implemented, rather than its design. For example, the procedures officially established for the DDR process did not require a weapons test for children associated with fighting forces, but, in practice, members of the peace-keeping forces who implemented the process frequently did require children to dismantle or otherwise demonstrate their familiarity with a weapon before they were included. Inadequate training and high turnover may have contributed to this.

One study found that 46 percent of the girls who had been excluded from DDR in Sierra Leone cited not having a weapon as the reason for their exclusion. That study also found

that all of the girls interviewed who had gone through DDR had been asked to turn in a weapon and pass a weapons test. The discrepancy between the policy and its implementation reinforces the lesson listed above on the importance of adequate training regarding children's issues for peacekeepers and military observers.¹⁴

Only seven of the 1,622 children demobilized from the Civilian Defense Forces (CDF) were girls. At the time of the DDR process, CDF leaders insisted that this was because there were very few girls who associated with the CDF. However, the study, "Where are the Girls?" and the screening process for the Girls Left Behind program determined that many girls had been with the CDF who simply were not allowed to present themselves for DDR. When the DDR was being carried out, CDF leaders insisted that girls had not been included in this force.¹⁵

Some girls were not allowed by their commanders or "bush husbands" to go through DDR, but many kept themselves out of the process. Some were afraid of the fighters and took the first opportunity to leave, some of them returning home. Many avoided the process because they did not want to be identified by family or community members as being associated with a rebel group and thus stigmatized. Some also feared that being identified as being part of a rebel fighting force would lead to prosecution or other penalties. The UNICEF consultant concluded that fear and shame kept more young women and girls out of the process than criteria related to weapons.¹⁶

Future DDR processes should include a subsequent point of entry into the process not dependent on the action of the commanders. This will be particularly useful for those who managed to go home directly or were not allowed to go through the DDR process. The possibility of access to reunification and reintegration support should be re-opened at some point after the close of the formal DDR, rather than as a parallel or continuous method, in order to maintain the incentive to go through the formal, verified disarmament and demobilization process. However, alternative means of verifying disarmament should be possible at some stage. Fairness argues for this, as many young women and girls who legitimately could have gone through the DDR process were prevented from doing so.

Balancing Different Priorities in DDR

There are inherent tensions underlying policy and field decisions about who gains access to a DDR process and who is then screened out, and it is important to make these explicit. Humanitarian actors tend to view these issues primarily from a human rights, human needs, and/or fairness perspective. Peacekeeping forces are likely to see the issue primarily in terms of getting arms out of the hands of as many combatants as quickly as possible in order to stop the conflict and secure the peace. Donor governments and organizations are likely to have legitimate concerns that the process be as effective as possible in screening out those who may try to gain access to the cash, material, educational, training, or other assistance to which those screened in become entitled. Failure to do so can overwhelm available resources. The reality is that *all* the perspectives and the values each reflects are legitimate, and it is also true that there is inherent tension among them. There are no simple solutions for reconciling these differences into an ideal DDR process. An essential step, however, is to acknowledge that these differences exist and attempt, throughout the planning and implementation stages, to keep them in balance.

Identification and Verification of Formerly Abducted Girls

Contrary to assumptions made during the planning of the Girls Left Behind project, a UNICEF evaluation did not find evidence that a large number of the formerly abducted girls were coerced by their captors to remain with them after the DDR process. Prior to the start of the program, IRC's contact with formerly abducted girls indicated that many were likely being held against their will by their former captors and that careful mediation with captors would be required to enable girls to even make contact with their families.¹⁷ The majority of young women and girls interviewed by the UNICEF consultant indicated that they either escaped or otherwise left the men with whom they had been forced to live before the DDR process. They had not in fact come to accept these forced relationships; they left when they had a chance.¹⁸ Some of the young women and girls associated with fighting forces did remain with their "bush husbands," but for many of them, this decision undoubtedly represented a lack of better alternatives.

Methods that UNICEF's partners used to identify formerly abducted girls included seeking the assistance of local religious and other leaders and collaboration with women's groups, youth groups, Child Welfare Committees, and drop-in centers. At least one organization—COOPI (Cooperazione Internazionale Insieme Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli [International Cooperation Entirety for the Development of the People])—used radio announcements effectively. Once some young women and girls had been identified, they proved to be effective in identifying others within the target group. Video was used to record and convey messages between formerly abducted girls and their families. This was an innovative tool to convince these young women that they could return home.

Family Reunification for Formerly Abducted Girls

As indicated in Table 5 above, of the 714 young women and girls included in the Girls Left Behind project, 494 wanted assistance tracing their families, and 424 were ultimately reunited with either immediate or extended family members, although many eventually decided not to remain with them. Some did not remain because they were stigmatized by members of their community due to their former association (forced or otherwise) with fighting forces. A UNICEF report indicated that among girls formerly associated with fighting forces, “many testified that although their parents and other immediate family members were happy to receive them, community reactions were not always positive. Many girls were subjected to verbal abuse, beatings, and exclusion from community social life.”¹⁹

During the DCOF visit, various informants reported that stigma and harassment were more likely to be a problem when reunifications were made in communities outside the areas in which the partner agencies were working. In their geographic areas of responsibility, the partners had done community sensitization work that greatly facilitated the acceptance of reunited former child soldiers.²⁰

Even if some formerly abducted girls decided not to remain with their parents or relatives, enabling them to re-establish this contact and reconnect to a family safety net will likely benefit them over time. Before reunification, many felt that they could never return home, but many found that they could and that their families at least would accept them. Re-establishing contact between a young woman who was abducted as a child and her family is significant in terms of social re-connection, particularly in a poor country like Sierra Leone where one’s extended family is the *de facto* social welfare safety net in times of crisis.

Interim Care Centers

Some interim care centers for children were located in the vicinity of the adult DDR encampment. This proved threatening to some of the girls, as did housing boys and girls together. In future DDR processes, separate centers for boys and girls should be considered, and centers for children should be located far from cantonment sites for adults associated with fighting forces.

Psychosocial Healing

The 2002 visit report included a section on psychosocial wounds and healing. That section and the one on critical elements of DDR each noted the relevance of traditional cleansing ceremonies in promoting the psychosocial recovery of children who have suffered trauma.²¹ Research commissioned by UNICEF and carried out in 2004 found that both traditional healing and faith-based (Christian and Muslim) interventions were important to the psychological and physical recovery and social reintegration of young women who had suffered sexual abuse and violence.²²

Who Benefited?

Although the beneficiaries of the Girls Left Behind project were abducted or otherwise associated with fighting forces as children, many of them were age eighteen and above when they participated in the project (the average age was twenty years). It is legitimate to consider whether it was appropriate to use DCOF funds to benefit these young women, since DCOF funds are specifically for children.

The large majority of these beneficiaries had very young children, born because of what they were subjected to by fighting forces—these infants and young children are significant, if indirect, beneficiaries of the project. As children of young women and girls who had been brutalized and socially marginalized, they are likely to be much more vulnerable than other young children in the same impoverished communities. The use of DCOF funds seems justified when it is recognized that participants were children when they were abducted, that their childhoods were stolen from them, and their children's future depends largely upon how well these young women's can reintegrate socially and provide support.

General Observations Regarding DDR

Skills Training

Literacy and numeracy training should be consistently provided in conjunction with skills training for trainees who cannot read and do basic math. Some NGOs that provided skills training to former child soldiers consistently incorporated literacy and numeracy training as part of the program while others did not. These skills are broadly applicable, highly valued, and vitally important to success with any economic activity. Literacy and numeracy also have significant psychosocial value, enhancing how young people see themselves and how they are perceived by their community, and opening mental horizons as well as concrete opportunities.

Any selection of skill areas for training should be based on a market analysis carried out by a qualified and experienced researcher. Too often, types of training are selected based on what agencies know how to provide and what participants want to learn. It would be more effective to use what participants want to learn as means for deciding among alternatives determined to have reasonably good market potential.

Training courses should be of an adequate duration and intensity to enable trainees to learn and use marketable skills. Several informants indicated that the six- to nine-month length of most classes was inadequate. While training can often be done more intensively with fewer trainees in a class—thus resulting in some trade-offs between number of participants and duration of training—for most skills, nine months or a year (with individual ongoing support) is minimally adequate, and two years is preferable .

The necessary duration of training, however, also depends on how the time is used during the training. Some of the classes observed were highly inefficient. For example, in one

class, five young women took turns weaving, watching as each other wove. Observation is of only limited value in learning skills; time spent actually practicing and using the skills improves and expedites learning.

While skills training should be implemented and evaluated with the goal of economic self-support, it is also important to recognize the social and psychological importance of the process. Recognition by the community that a former child soldier is learning a valued, constructive skill can facilitate the child's acceptance and reintegration and diminish fear and stigma.

As expected, provision of start-up kits was critical in enabling those who completed training to begin earning income, and it is regrettable that some of the partners in the Girls Left Behind project did not offer such kits consistently. Follow-up counseling and support after the completion of training also appeared to increase the proportion of graduates who successfully used their skills and tools. Information from interviews with partners and available reports suggests that around 70 percent of those who completed training subsequently used their skills to generate income.

Provisions for on-site child care, health screening and service, and careful attention to securing both a safe place to live and to engage in an economic activity after completion of training were quite important. COOPI included all of these elements in its training and produced good results. In particular, health services were important: reproductive health services were especially useful for young women and girls who had been sexually abused or sexually active; almost 20 percent of the children in the Makeni Interim Care Center (ICC) needed hernia operations due to having been forced to carry heavy ammunition boxes.²³

Apprenticeship can offer opportunities for participants to learn skills relevant to specific types of economic activity (for example, tailoring) and to learn business skills by both participating in and observing the operation of an ongoing business. However, this approach to training requires careful planning and a structured curriculum for the achievement of specific, measured skills over a designated period of time. The agency responsible must also provide careful ongoing monitoring to ensure that young people placed in apprenticeships are safe, and are neither abused nor exploited.

The Reintegration Caseload

In Sierra Leone, UNICEF's partners reported reuniting 5,500 former child soldiers and other separated children with their families. With the oversight of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs and facilitation by UNICEF, a geographic division of responsibility for monitoring the situation of these children was established among child protection NGOs. The community-based reintegration program has facilitated the reintegration of children with their families, communities, and peer groups. This has been accomplished by developing community-level Child Welfare Committees and Children Clubs and periodic follow-up visits by NGO social workers. These visits focus largely on strengthening the capacity of parents, caregivers, and community members to enable children to adjust to life in the community and to play normal social

roles. Ensuring opportunities for children to return to school or receive skills training has been a major factor in successful reintegration, helping children to establish a new identity, and increasing their acceptance by family and community members and peers.

The majority of the caseload of 5,500 was reunified between 2000 and 2002. In the succeeding period, the large majority have reintegrated well and are not significantly different from other children. Based on social workers' assessments during follow-up visits, children who have been reintegrated well have been removed from the caseload requiring continued monitoring by the child protection NGOs. After the first round of follow-up visits, the caseload was reduced to 4,400. Monitoring criteria were then established that children dropped from the caseload if they had been home for more than a year; were in school, skills training, or working; and there were no abuse concerns. The caseload was subsequently reduced to 2,800. UNICEF anticipates that by August 2005 the monitoring caseload will have been reduced to approximately 280 and that these children for whom ongoing concerns remain will need to be referred to an agency with more sophisticated capacity to address psychosocial needs.

Critical Elements of DDR

The DCOF visit to Sierra Leone in May 2002 identified six elements as critically important to the successful family and community reintegration of separated children, especially children formerly associated with fighting forces:

- Community sensitization
- Demobilization and transition period
- Tracing and family mediation
- Return to family and community, and follow up
- Traditional cleansing ceremonies
- School or skills training²⁴

Since 2002, 98 percent of the children separated during the war have been reunited and a number of evaluations carried out. The February 2005 visit confirmed the importance of all of the six factors and found that some elaboration is needed (these additions and changes are indicated below in italics).

1. Community sensitization. As noted above, community sensitization made a difference in the acceptance and reintegration of former child soldiers. Young women reunified were more likely to remain with their parents or relatives if they were residing in a community where sensitization work had been done to increase acceptance and reduce stigma and hostility.

2. *Formal disarmament and demobilization.* For former child soldiers, participating in a formal process marking their transition back to civilian life is an important step toward

reintegration, and is distinct from the typically lengthier period of weeks in an interim care center.

3. Transition period in separate centers for boys and girls located well away from adult DDR sites. Some girls reported sexual harassment in ICCs, either by male residents or adult combatants.

4. Tracing and family mediation. The importance of a good, country-wide system of tracing and family mediation as part of the reunification process was reinforced by observations during the DCOF visit.

5. Return to family, community, and follow-up, and extended monitoring for children not placed with their parents. Children who were reunited with one or both of their parents tended to do well. Many other children were reunited with extended family members, and some of the latter have been treated as domestic servants, which is consistent with traditional patterns within the region. In addition to careful screening before placing a separated child with an extended family member and a public agreement that the child will be cared for on a par with other children in the household, a period of regular monitoring is required.

6. Traditional cleansing ceremonies, traditional healing, and religious support. Based on research by a UNICEF consultant, it is appropriate to consider traditional healing and religious support as additional forms of support that can potentially aid the healing of those who have suffered from violence or abuse. It is also necessary to recognize that traditional practices are not universally benign; some are harmful. An organization must determine what a practice involves before encouraging or supporting it.

7. School or skills training of adequate quality and duration, coupled with literacy and numeracy instruction and provision of tools, materials, and follow-up counseling. Demobilized child soldiers tended to value education highly, because it enhances future employment prospects, is seen as intrinsically valuable, and because being a student alters the way that one is regarded—and enhances acceptance—by community members. Some chose the skills training option instead, perhaps because they felt too old to return to school, or perceived being able to generate income as more urgent.

8. Ongoing access to health care, particularly for war-related conditions for those in school or training. Health services were an obvious priority in the ICCs, as some demobilized child soldiers had lived for years in the bush, were wounded, and/or had been subjected to repeated sexual abuse and exploitation. The infants or young children of female students or trainees often had acute health problems as well. Many of these health issues could not be adequately resolved during the weeks in an ICC. Access to health services beyond any available in a village was important for the subsequent period of education or training. Some organizations did not make adequate provision for access to health services.

9. Individual supportive counseling, facilitation, and encouragement. The UNICEF consultant who evaluated the Girls Left Behind project reported that only a percentage of those interviewed had expected counseling when they entered the program. About 35 percent said that the things that they most appreciated about the project were the counseling, friendships, and encouragement they received.²⁵ In reflecting on my experiences during the review of DCOF-supported services in Sierra Leone in 2002 while listening to former program participants during the 2005 visit, I recognized that previously I had not adequately appreciated the importance of counseling during the difficult transition in the ICCs, when making good choices about what skill training to select, when facing hostility within the community, or when struggling to generate income with skills learned.

Other Issues of Concern

During much of the ten-day visit to Sierra Leone, I focused on the reintegration of former child soldiers—young women and girls in particular—to understand what was accomplished with previous DCOF funding and to identifying lessons with potential relevance to other situations. The visit also provided some opportunities to gather limited information about other issues relevant to particularly vulnerable children, which warrant further exploration.

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

While difficult to quantify, the sexual abuse of girls is a problem receiving increasing attention in Sierra Leone. It was mentioned as an issue in schools, where girls may face pressure from teachers or cope with the pressure to pay secondary school fees by exchanging sex for money.

The police have established a Family Support Unit, one of the responsibilities of which is to deal with cases of sexual violence. The International Rescue Committee has established the Rainbow Center in Freetown to provide support and services for women and girls who have suffered sexual violence. Eighty percent of the clients are children ranging in age from six to sixteen. Eighty-five percent of the perpetrators were known to the clients, often a relative or other member of their household. There are few alternative care arrangements available, and many children return to the same households; some experienced subsequent sexual violence. Current legislation provides for very limited punishment for sexual crimes, and there is no provision for removing a child from a dangerous situation.

Children Living on the Street

In 2004, UNICEF helped local and international NGOs to organize a night count to determine how many children in Freetown and the four largest towns were living on the street. The findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Night Count of Children Living on the Street

| Location | Boys | | Girls | | Total | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Bo | 136 | 87.7 | 19 | 12.3 | 155 | 100 |
| Makeni | 349 | 86.0 | 57 | 14.0 | 406 | 100 |
| Kenema | 112 | 91.8 | 10 | 8.2 | 122 | 100 |
| Koidu Town | 259 | 74.4 | 89 | 25.6 | 348 | 100 |
| Western Area (Freetown and environs) | 1660 | 90.0 | 183 | 10.0 | 1843 | 100 |
| Total | 2516 | 87.5 | 358 | 12.5 | 2874 | 100 |

During the visit, I had a discussion with a group of twenty-eight street boys in a literacy class supported by GOAL Ireland. It provided a glimpse of the situation of these children outside family care. Of the group, twelve of the boys were originally from Freetown and sixteen were from other parts of the country. Their responses—which offer a brief glimpse into the lives they lead and their hopes—are summarized in Appendix F.

Children and Mining

On the outskirts of Kono town, we visited a site where miners, some of them adolescents, dig for diamonds. We were told that months go by without any being found. World Vision staff—who have been working to remove children from mining areas—showed us around. They are concerned not only with those who are digging, but the young girls who spend their days selling packets of food to the miners. Some children have been helped to return to school, but there seemed to be few alternatives that would enable the children and their households to support themselves.

APPENDIX A: SCOPE OF WORK

Scope of Work for Visit to Liberia by John Williamson for the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund of USAID

February 9 – 16, 2005

Background

The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund has provided a total of \$1,499,293 for Agreement 669-CA-00-03-004 established by USAID/Liberia with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The duration of this agreement is 9/22/03-9/21/06. Prior to this agreement, DCOF funding was used in Liberia for the WAYS and SWAY projects of UNICEF, which aimed to facilitate the reintegration of former child soldiers and other separated children.

Purpose

This is primarily a monitoring visit for DCOF to gather information about recently funded DCOF projects. In order to enable the DCOF team to understand the context in which the project is operating, the DCOF Team will seek information on the situation in Sierra Leone, including current and anticipated interventions, trends, critical issues, and opportunities relevant to children affected by armed conflict. In addition, the DCOF team will seek to gather information and establish communication links with relevant experts and organizations working in Liberia in connection with technical operational issues relevant to its projects generally:

- Improving services for children without adequate family by developing standards and guidance on interventions, exchanging lessons learned, and facilitating professional exchange
- Microeconomic or livelihood strengthening to improve the well-being of highly vulnerable children
- Interventions to improve the psychosocial well-being of children and young people affected by armed conflict, especially separated children
- The development, strengthening, and sustaining of community safety nets for children and youth.†

† Prior to their departure for Liberia, the team was also asked by DCOF to give attention to USAID's *Fragile States Strategy* (USAID, January 2005, PD-ACA-999) and explore with the USAID mission in Liberia whether there are critical priorities in the areas of social and economic integration of children and adolescents that additional DCOF funding could effectively address over the next three to five years.

DCOF Representative

John Williamson, Senior Technical Advisor of DCOF, who has worked for DCOF on a full-time basis since 1997, will carry out the visit.

Time Frame and Itinerary

Mr. Williamson arrived in Monrovia on February 9, 2005, and participated in briefings and meetings in Monrovia regarding the project and the situation of war-affected children in Liberia, visited DDDR activities implemented by IRC in Montserado and Ganta, and conducted exit debriefings with USAID/Liberia and IRC before departing for Freetown, Sierra Leone on February 16, 2005.

Deliverables

Mr. Williamson will prepare:

- A brief written description of its key observations and recommendations, which is to be presented to USAID/Liberia and IRC at exit debriefings.
- A report on their visit addressing in greater detail their observations regarding the situation of children affected by armed conflict in Liberia and the implementation of DCOF-funded activities, and recommendations, which is to be submitted to Lloyd Feinberg, the Manager of DCOF; Cathy Savino the manager of the support project for DCOF; USAID/Liberia; and IRC within two weeks of their return to the United States.

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APPENDIX C: ITINERARY

| ACTIVITY | LOCATION | PARTICIPANTS |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| Sunday, January 30 | | |
| Arrival Freetown | Lungi | John Williamson [applies to each box, below] |
| Monday, January 31 | | |
| Reading and informal discussion with Donald Robertshaw | Freetown | |
| Tuesday, February 1 | | |
| Initial meeting with USAID/Sierra Leone | USAID Office in Freetown | Christine Scheckler, Eddie Benya, Abulai Jallo USAID Office |
| Introduction to UNICEF Officer in charge UNICEF Program Brief by Program Coordinator, Child Protection Officer, Education Officer, and HIV Officer (Includes Socio-Political Overview UNICEF Programme Brief by Programme Coordinator, Child Protection Officer, Health Officer, Education Officer, and HIV Officer | UNICEF Office, Freetown | UNICEF Office |
| lunch | UNICEF Office | UNICEF Office Donald Robertshaw, Child Protection Officer |
| Interview with Former Beneficiaries of the COOPI Reintegration Program in Western Area, four beneficiaries, project overview and in depth discussions | Calaba Town | COOPI, Antonella LaMorte |
| Wednesday, February 2 | | |
| IRC Office Visit , Overview of Programs | Freetown, Main Motor Rd | IRC, Jason Phillips and Rebecca Simson |
| CCF Office Visit, Situation of Children and Programs For Children | Freetown, Wilkinson Rd. | CCF, Director |
| MSWGCA on Reintegration, Street Children, Sexual Abuse, Child Rights Act, Children's Policy Child Trafficking | MSWGCA, Freetown | Contact Teresa Vamboi, CDO, MSWGCA, including MSWGCA Focal Pts, Francis Lahai Street Children/ |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | Reintegration, Mariatu Bangura CJS, Joyce Kamara |
| Thursday, February 3 | | |
| Depart Freetown for Koidu by Road | Freetown | Scheckler& Jallo, USAID Robertshaw, UNICEF |
| Arrive in Koidu | Koidu | |
| COOPI Centre, To Review Girls Left Behind Project and Other Vulnerable Children Issues, Meet Beneficiaries, Working Lunch | Koidu | COOPI, Koidu |
| Community Meeting with children, CWC members, facilitated by IRC on the Reintegration of Children affected by War including the Girls Left Behind and Emerging CP Issues | Bumpeh | Chrsitof Kurz, IRC |
| Visit A Girl Left Behind Beneficiary who is living with her family and a Beneficiary who is living with her parents | Koidu | IRC Koidu |
| Friday, February 4 | | |
| Visit Child Mining Site | Koidu environs | World Vision International |
| Depart for Makeni | Koidu | |
| Site Visit to Caritas Makeni , Girls Left Behind Project, to meet the girls and have a focus group discussion on best strategies for reintegration | Makeni | UNICEF Makeni and Caritas Makeni |
| Visit Community School Project, with Community Leader and Women's Association to discuss Child Protection and Education Issues, no CWC operational | Rorinka Community School, Makeni | UNICEF and Caritas Makeni |
| Visit Action for Children in Conflict center for street children and abused children | Makeni | AFC Makeni and UNICEF, Makeni |
| Saturday, February 5 | | |
| Depart Makeni, Prior to departure informal discussions can be arranged with children affected by war | Makeni | |
| Orphans Family Support Project of Matthew 6 Foundation, Project overview, discussion with caregivers and children | Grafton, Western Area | Komba Pessima, Director |
| Arrive Freetown | Freetown | |
| Dinner with Donald Robershaw and Mats Utas | Freetown | |
| Sunday, February 6 | | |
| Free day | | |
| Monday , February 7 | | |

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Goal Street Children Program, group discussion with children | Clock Tower, Freetown | Mohamed Konneh, Coordinator, Partnership and Capacity Building |
| Meeting at USAID with LINKS partner organizations | Freetown | Eddie Benya & Abdulai Jallo, USAID Representatives of CARE, American Refugee Committee, Search for Common Ground, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision |
| National Commission for War Affected Children | Freetown | NACWAC, Bintu Magona, Executive Director |
| Child Protection Network meeting on Child Sexual Abuse, Street Children, orphans and vulnerable children | UNICEF, Freetown | Marie Manyeh of UNICEF, Francis Lahai of MSWGCA, IRC, GOAL, COOPI, AFC, UNICDA, Don Bosco, Handicap International, World Vision, CCF, SSL, Don Bosco |
| Tuesday, February 8 | | |
| Discussion on Emerging Child Protection Issues with 11 members of the Children's Forum Network | UNICEF, Freetown | UNICEF, Glenis Taylor |
| Debrief with UNICEF | Freetown | Donald Robertshaw |
| Debrief USAID | Freetown | Christine Scheckler, USAID office |
| Debrief with US Ambassador | Freetown | US Embassy Ambassador Thomas N. Hull |
| Travel to Lungi | | |
| Wednesday, February 9 | | |
| Departure for Monrovia | Lungi | |

APPENDIX D: LIST OF CONTACTS

US Embassy

Ambassador Thomas N. Hull
James Stewart, Deputy Chief of Mission

USAID/Sierra Leone

Christine Sheckler, Country Program Coordinator
Eddie Benya, Reintegration Team Leader
Abdulai Jallo,

UNICEF Sierra Leone

Donald Robertshaw, Child Protection Officer
Glenis Taylor, Project Officer – Child protection

Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

Teresa Vamboi
Francis Lahai
Maiatu Bangura
Joyce Kamara

National Commission for War Affected Children

Bintu Magona, Executive Director
Mariana Zombo, Program Officer
Patrick K. Vamboi, Reintegration Coordinator
Mohaned S. Kanneh, Deputy Executive Secretary

Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)

Antonella LaMorte, Country Director
Daniele Girel, Head, Kono program
Mamie Conteh, D.I.C. Manger
Jeneba Combey, Social Worker
Marima Kabba, Social Worker

Caritas Makeni

Thomas Turay, Director
Abu J. Conteh, Child Protection Manager
Victoria Jah, Project Supervisor

The Wantani Project, Mathew 6 Foundation

Kombah Pessima, Executive Director

Action for Children in Conflict

Shellac Sonny Davies, Country Director
Peter Y. Koroma, Regional Manager

Vumaila Sesay, Center Manager
John B. Kamara, Senior Social Worker
Andrew Koroma, Social Worker

Christian Children's Fund

Daniel E. Kaindaneh, Acting National Director
Richie Jones, Acting Program Manager
Yusufu Kamara, Area Manager

GOAL Sierra Leone

Peter Middlemiss, Director
Mohamed Konneh, Coordinator, Partnership and Capacity Building

American Refugee Committee

Sarah Ward, LINKS Program Manager

World Vision Sierra Leone

Tom Roberts, Agricultural Economist
Abu Yarmah, Program Manager – LINKS

Search for Common Ground

Frances Fortune, Country Director

Catholic Relief Services

Bill Dipl, Head of Programming
Oscar Maroto

Mats Utas, Researcher

APPENDIX E: GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR THE GIRLS LEFT BEHIND PROJECT

(girls that were abducted)

- I. Introduction: A project has been designed/approved to provide support services for girls that were abducted. This is a one-time short-term intensive intervention, to be completed by 31 March 2004. The operational areas targeted are Bombali, Kailahun and Kono Districts. Other districts might be included in the event that the girls/young women are reunified/residing outside of the three mentioned above. The project will be implemented within the framework of the CP Network and the Community-Based Reintegration (CBR) approach.
- II. Define the criteria for beneficiary qualification
 - A. Girls and young women who are still living with their captors or those who were abducted and have been released or escaped. Beneficiaries who qualify are girls of 17 years or younger, or young women between 18 and 25, who were abducted/taken from their parents or original care givers during the conflict before they reached 18 years of age.
 - B. Secondary beneficiaries are women who are vulnerable to or victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. This category may be assisted through the strengthening of services and reporting/investigation systems.
- III. Project strategy and activities:
 - A. Identification
 1. Identify and locate/track the girls who are still being held:
 - a. Launch an active sensitisation advocacy radio campaign including interactive programmes run by reintegrated children.
 - b. Facilitate girl-to-girl identification through social gatherings.
 - c. Collaborate with women leaders and women's groups.
 - d. Collaborate with peer/youth groups
 - e. Collaborate with women ex-combatants
 - f. Encourage self-referral at drop-in centres
 - g. Utilise community-based groups, such as Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and Family Support Units (FSUs).
 2. Verify to determine whether or not other girls that come forward qualify for support:
 - a. See attached "Beneficiary Verification Questionnaire".
 - B. Family tracing, reunification or alternative living choice
 1. Assist girls in making their reunification decisions, which could include:
 - a. Reunification with family of origin
 - b. Staying with "husband"
 - c. Living with friends
 2. Initiate an individualized service plan for Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) activities.
 3. Further assist those girls still remain (either voluntarily or by coercion) with their "husbands" to access services.
 - a. Provide family mediation and counseling, when appropriate and possible.

C. Service Provision

1. Because this is a short-term one-time intervention, the girls/young women participating in this program should sign a contract/agreement acknowledging their understanding of these limitations.
2. Service delivery options include:
 - a. FTR
 - b. Basic primary health care for girls and babies
 - c. Medical care for war wounds and sexual trauma
 - d. Specialized care for severely traumatized children or young women
 - e. Reproductive health care
 - f. Access to schooling - Community Education Investment Program (CEIP)
 - g. Access to skill training, small business development and apprenticeships
 - h. Non-formal literacy, numeracy and life skills
 - i. Recreational opportunities
 - j. Reintegration/reunification packages
3. Services can be provided through:
 - a. School
 - b. Primary health care units (PHU)
 - c. Drop-in centres
 - d. Social Work follow-up visits
4. Training in the areas concerning the target girls/young women can be given to service providers.

Follow-up support

1. The CPA assigned to the girl's respective district is responsible for follow-up.
2. The Social Development Workers (SDWs) at the Chiefdom level are also responsible for monitoring and follow-up.
3. Close collaboration is encouraged with the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) Family Support Units (FSU) to deal with gender based violence (GBV) issues.

IV. Funding Categories

- A. Drop-in centers offering counseling health education, medical referrals, recreation, non-formal education, training in parenting skills
- B. Skills and literacy training
- C. Family tracing and reunification in Northern and Eastern provinces including mediation advocacy and counseling with abductors, families and communities
- D. Training for CWCs
- E. Training for Mother Child Health (MCH) Aides and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) in Bombali, Kono, and Kailahun Districts to strengthen basic reproductive health services, and to provide counseling and referral.
- F. Training for Non Governmental Organization (NGO) and Government and Social Workers
- G. Capacity building of Government in planning and monitoring support to victims of sexual violence Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Child Affairs (MSWGCA) and SLP.

APPENDIX F: RESPONSES OF STREET BOYS

This discussion took place on February 7th with 28 boys in a literacy class held at a project site managed by GOAL Ireland close to the Clock Tower in Freetown.

How do you spend your time?

Sweeper at market
Porter carrying loads
Drag a magnet through gutters for coins and gamble
Wash dishes for a food seller
Search dustbins
Collect peppers dropped at the market and sell them
Apprentice carpenter
Sell old slippers (flip-flops)
Steal onions and sell them
Apprentice bicycle repairman
Go to school (supported by GOAL)

Why are you on the street?

Each of the three boys who responded in the limited time available each told a story about having been ill-treated by a relative with whom he had been living and deciding to leave for Freetown.

What would you like to do in the future?

Continue schooling (3 responses)
Be reunified and go to school
Learn to be a mechanic
Stay in the GOAL program until form five
Learn tailoring
Don't want to be a drug addict
Don't want to be a thief
Go to school and become a millionaire

NOTES

- 1 USAID, January 2005, PD-ACA-999.
- 2 Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, "Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War, International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Montréal, 2004, p. 91.
- 3 USAID, January 2005, PD-ACA-999.
- 4 Kaiser, Reinhard et al. "HIV/AIDS Seroprevalence and Behavioral Risk Factor Survey in Sierra Leone," April 2002
- 5 UNAIDS: <http://www.unaids.org/EN/Geographical+Area/by+country/liberia.asp>
- 6 Heinemann, 1996.
- 7 Richards, Paul, Steven Archibald, Beverlee Bruce, Watta Modad, Edward Mulbah, Tornorlah Varpilah, James Vincentand. *Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment*, The World Bank, Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction, Paper No. 21 / January 2005.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. vii.
- 9 Williamson and Cripe, June 2002.
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- 11 Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, "Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War, International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Montréal, 2004, p. 91.
- 12 Williamson and Cripe, *op. cit.*, p. 11
- 13 Sherrill Whittington. "The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls in West and Central Africa and the UNICEF Response," UNICEF, 2005, p. 29.
- 14 McKay and Mazurana, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 100-101.
- 15 *Ibid.* pp.95-98.
- 16 Chris Coulter. "Assessment of the 'Girls Left Behind' Project for Girls and Young Women Who Did Not Enter DDR," draft consultant's report to UCNIEF Sierra Leone, 2004., p. 37
- 17 Williamson and Cripe, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.
- 18 Coulter, p. 36.
- 19 Whittington, p. 19.
- 20 Williamson and Cripe, pp. 26&27.
- 21 *Ibid.* 17-20, 29.
- 22 Mats Utas. "Traditional Healing of Young Sexual Abuse Survivors in the Aftermath of the Sierra Leone Civil War," consultant's report to UNICEF Sierra Leone [undated].
- 23 "From Conflict to Hope: Children in Sierra Leone's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme," UNICEF Sierra Leone, 2004, p. 4.
- 24 Williamson and Cripe, pp. 26-29.
- 25 Whittington, p. 18

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