



Action Plan for Children Affected by War Progress Report January – June 2004

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Executive Summary

The Action Plan for Children Affected by War was conceived at a time of great hope for Sri Lanka. It was the only signed human rights agreement to emerge from the peace talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) before the talks were suspended in 2003. It represented a genuine commitment by both parties to address the needs of war-affected children as an integral part of the peace process, and a specific commitment on the part of the LTTE to cease child recruitment and to release all children in its ranks.

A year later, the political climate has changed dramatically in Sri Lanka. The peace talks have been interrupted for over a year and the security situation in the North East has deteriorated significantly. The split in the LTTE, which occurred in April 2004 after the defection of the Eastern commander Colonel Karuna, has added to the instability. The LTTE is not releasing significant numbers of under-age conscripts and continues to recruit children into its ranks. The Action Plan, as originally conceived, cannot be fully implemented in such an unstable political climate.

A total number of 4,250 cases of under-age recruitment by the LTTE have been reported to, and verified by, UNICEF since April 2001. Of these, 488 children were recruited during the reporting period, from 1 January – 30 June 2004. At the same time, the LTTE released 449 children during the reporting period, and a total of 1,003 child soldiers since April 2001.¹

Significant progress has been made in providing children in the North East with basic services under the Action Plan, as well as facilitating the reintegration of former child soldiers. During the reporting period, 6,751 children enrolled back to school; 43,881 children received catch-up-education classes and 241 school buildings damaged or destroyed in the war were repaired or reconstructed. Five hundred and eighty (580) child soldiers and their families received social work assessments, while 410 children who were engaged in hazardous labour and or were living in the streets benefited from social work support. Two hundred and Thirty-four (234) children enrolled in vocational training, 22 families received micro-credit loans and a further 197 families were assessed for income generation support, 94 of whom were waiting to be issued a loan at the end of the reporting period. Thirty extremely vulnerable families also received special assistance. Forty-two Gramodaya Health Centres (GHC's) were repaired or reconstructed and 212 schools benefited from improved water and sanitation facilities. Thirty-one children's homes have been supported under the Action Plan, with special assistance given to disabled children and 94 children received psycho-social support. While these numbers demonstrate tangible benefits for children, all partners to the Action Plan must ensure that improvements in the lives of children are real and sustainable and that more children affected by the conflict are reached by the programme.

¹ This number does not include the more than 1,600 former child soldiers who left the LTTE in April 2004 in the East following the split in the LTTE and who have registered with UNICEF but have not been issued with formal release papers from the LTTE.

Progress on rehabilitation also requires genuine political will by both the GoSL and the LTTE to create a climate of peace and stability throughout the country. Conditions for children have improved significantly during the past two years of relative peace and stability in Sri Lanka. The most damaging outcome for all children would be a resumption of war.

UNICEF calls on both the GoSL and the LTTE to find the means to actively re-engage in the peace negotiations in order to reach a negotiated settlement that will create a climate of safety and stability that is beneficial to all children.

More specifically, UNICEF calls on both parties to honour their commitments under the Action Plan. The LTTE should immediately cease all recruitment of under 18 year olds and release all children within its ranks. The LTTE should actively publicize its commitment not to accept under 18 year olds, verify the age of all young people who volunteer to join its ranks to ensure that they are not under-age and cease all forcible recruitment and abductions.

The GoSL should ensure that children have full and free access to primary and secondary education, vocational training and health care throughout the North East. In particular, the GoSL should ensure that there are sufficient numbers of adequately trained teachers, health and social workers in the North East and that school and health buildings damaged or destroyed by the war are repaired and reconstructed. The GoSL should also amend the Prevention of Terrorism Act to ensure that it does not apply to children under 18 years of age and should continue to work with civil society groups to develop a legal framework that addresses questions of transitional justice.

The international community also has a responsibility to increase the resources and assistance available to war-affected children in the North East. In particular, partner agencies to the Action Plan need to increase their programmes, staffing and capacity to respond more swiftly and effectively to the needs of children and their families. More organizations should be involved in the Action Plan in order to achieve broader coverage and to speed up the response. Partner organizations should continue to build alliances with community-based organizations and develop strategies to protect children from violations of their rights, including under-age recruitment. All agencies should increase their advocacy efforts on behalf of children. The international community, including donor governments, international and non-governmental organizations, should make a concerted effort to press both the GoSL and the LTTE to re-engage in the peace process. In particular, they should continue to call on the LTTE to honour its commitments under the Action Plan, immediately cease all recruitment of children under 18 years of age and release all children in its ranks.

Without concrete action by both the GoSL and the LTTE to honour their commitments under the peace process, and more specifically under the Action Plan, children will be unable to resume a completely normal life and achieve their full potential. Ultimate responsibility for creating a peaceful and stable environment in Sri Lanka lies with the GoSL and the LTTE. In the absence of such an environment, the Action Plan cannot be fully effective.

The Action Plan – Analysis of the Progress and Constraints, and Recommendations for Future Action

Background

The Action Plan for Children Affected by War is the only signed human rights agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to have emerged from the suspended peace talks in 2003. The GoSL and the LTTE agreed to the Action Plan just days before the formal peace negotiations were suspended in April 2003. As such, it represents the only formal agreement by both sides to address the urgent needs of children affected by war as an integral part of the peace process.

During the Oslo and Berlin rounds of peace talks in December 2002 and February 2003 respectively, the LTTE agreed to work with UNICEF and the government to develop an *Action Plan for Children Affected by War*. UNICEF facilitated the development of the Action Plan with active input from the GoSL, the LTTE, UN and other international agencies, and international and national NGOs. The details of the Action Plan were agreed to during a workshop held in Kilinochchi in April 2003. The GoSL and the LTTE both signed an agreement committing to the Action Plan in June 2003 and implementation began in August.

Objectives and Beneficiaries

The Action Plan is a multi-sectoral, holistic programme designed to improve the living conditions for children affected by war in all eight districts of the North East of Sri Lanka. These include, child soldiers, children engaged in hazardous labour, school drop-outs, street children and other vulnerable children. The Action Plan provides war affected children with opportunities to access education, skills training, income generation, and improved health care. The aim is to provide children and their families with meaningful support and engagement that will help restore normalcy to their lives and reduce the risk of recruitment into the LTTE.



Keele/UNICEF
Two young girls line up to register for Catch-Up Education classes

Under the Action Plan, the LTTE committed to cease all recruitment of children and to release all children already in its ranks. This important pledge by the LTTE is one of the central tenets of the whole Action Plan. The GoSL committed to increase its support to the delivery of services for the children of the North East affected by the conflict.

Children are assisted under the Action Plan through two mechanisms that focus on different categories of children. The first focuses on former child soldiers who are released by the LTTE either directly to their homes or through the transit centre in Kilinochchi in the north. UNICEF refers children to a team of Save the Children in Sri Lanka (SCiSL) social workers who make individual assessments of each child and their family to determine their needs for rehabilitation and reintegration support.

The second focuses on a much broader category of vulnerable and war affected children in the North East. By encouraging children to return to school, providing catch-up-education classes, increasing access to vocational training and income generation opportunities and improving the quality of health care throughout the North East, the Action Plan is helping to address the needs of these children. Very vulnerable children may also be assisted by social workers from the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW). Social workers from the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) also assist children engaged in hazardous labour and street children. Some 31 alternative care institutions and more than 16 community-based organizations have been engaged to provide psycho-social support and other services for vulnerable children.

Coordination

The Action Plan activities are coordinated by a technical coordination group currently comprised of the Ministry of Social Welfare (Department of Probation and Child Care Services - DPCCS), TRO, ILO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and SCiSL. The technical coordination group meets on a monthly basis. In addition, agencies meet every month to coordinate activities at the district level and there are regular meetings of partner agencies for the different sectors of the Action Plan.

Under the Action Plan, children are supported through a range of services that are implemented by different UN agencies, international and national NGOs and government institutions. In the period under review, the number of organizations participating in the Action Plan was expanded to reach more children and now includes international organizations such as ILO, UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF; international NGOs, including CARE, FORUT, GTZ, Oxfam, SciSL, WUSC, World Vision and ZOA; and national and local NGOs, including Butterfly Gardens, CARITAS, ESCO, Sarvodaya, SWOAD and TRO.

In June, UNICEF hired two consultants to assist with the coordination of the reintegration activities of the Action Plan, one based in Colombo (for central coordination) and one in the East. The addition of these posts has helped to improve overall coordination of the Action Plan.

Major Trends and Developments

January – June 2004

- **488** children under 18 years of age were recruited by the LTTE (reports received and verified by UNICEF)²
- **449**³ child soldiers were released by the LTTE
- **6,751** children have enrolled in school as a result of UNICEF's back-to-school drive

² This number reflects the reports of under-age recruitment received and verified by UNICEF during the reporting period. The actual number is likely to be higher.

³ This number does not include the more than 1,600 former child soldiers who returned voluntarily to their homes in April 2004 in the East and who have registered with UNICEF but have not been issued formal release papers by the LTTE

- **43,881** children are enrolled in catch-up-education classes throughout the North East
- **11,599** children have received school kits
- **241** school buildings have been repaired or reconstructed
- **580** former child soldiers and their families have received social work assessments
- **410** children engaged in hazardous labour and street children have received social work assessments
- **234** children are enrolled in vocational training
- **197** children and their families have been assessed for income generation assistance
- **22** families have received a micro-credit loan
- **42** Gramodaya Health Centres (GHC's) have been repaired or constructed
- **212** water and sanitation facilities have been constructed in schools
- **86** water and sanitation facilities have been constructed in health centres
- **30** extremely vulnerable children and their families have received special assistance
- **31** children's homes have been assisted
- **94** children received psycho-social support

The Political Situation

During the first six months of 2004, the peace talks remained suspended due to disagreements between the GoSL and the LTTE over the interim administrative arrangements and how these link to a final resolution of the conflict. Early elections in April resulted in the formation of a new government. The new government is a coalition of numerous parties, some of which are heavily opposed to giving any concessions to the LTTE. For the LTTE, the cornerstone for returning to the peace table is the government's approval of their Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) proposal which many in the new government have stated will never be accepted. This has placed considerable strain on the peace process, and rhetoric on both sides of the conflict has become more pronounced in recent months.

An internal split within the LTTE has further complicated the peace process. The split has led to a dangerous increase in extrajudicial killings across the country as the two sides continue to confront each other. These developments have combined to create a great deal of tension between the GoSL and the LTTE further stalling peace efforts.

Situation in the East

The major development during the reporting period was the unexpected and unplanned return of over 1,800 child soldiers⁴ in the East following fighting between rival factions of the LTTE in April 2004. The former commander of the LTTE in the East, Colonel Karuna, split away from the LTTE in March 2004 triggering fierce fighting between the two factions. When Karuna left the East in April 2004, thousands of LTTE cadres, including over 1,800 children, also returned to their homes.

In response, UNICEF set up mobile registration centres in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts in order to register the former child soldiers who returned home

⁴ This was the figure at the time of reporting, the final figure is expected to be higher

voluntarily. One hundred and thirty six of the children had received official release papers from the LTTE by the end of June, while over 1,600 additional children had registered with UNICEF for protection and reintegration support.

The scale and unexpected nature of this return has put an enormous strain on the capacity and resources of all partner agencies under the Action Plan. At the same time, the reintegration of returned children occurred in a climate of growing insecurity and instability in the East of the country. While recruitment was lower in the months of March and April, it accelerated again in May and June 2004. UNICEF staff received 57 reports of recruitment or re-recruitment in May and June in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts alone. Moreover, the reported acts of recruitment were of an increasingly violent nature.



Watkins/UNICEF
Former child soldiers play while they wait to be reunited with their

UNICEF protection staff received reports of LTTE cadres abducting children on their way to and from school and from outside school buildings. Families reported that armed LTTE cadres had abducted children from their homes in the middle of the night and beaten family members who tried to resist. Many of the children targeted were the same as those who returned from the LTTE's eastern cadre in April 2004.

The first priority for most families has been to protect their children from re-recruitment. Many have been afraid to send their children back to school or to allow them to participate in other reintegration activities for fear of re-recruitment. Some families have left the district, or sent their children away as a protection strategy. Social workers and other partner agencies can often not find children and their families when they visit the villages. These serious protection problems are hampering the implementation and impact of reintegration activities.

Recruitment and Releases

As part of its commitment to the Action Plan, the LTTE pledged to cease all recruitment of children under 18 years of age and to release all children within its ranks. There have been some significant results arising out of the Action Plan:

- Release rates by the LTTE have more than doubled since the Action Plan was signed: 278 children were released by the LTTE from June 2002 to June 2003, while 639 children were released from June 2003 to June 2004 under the Action Plan.
- 449 children were released during the reporting period, of whom 371 were released directly to their homes, and 78 to the transit centre. Of the 449 children released, 227 were boys (51%) and 222 were girls (49%).
- Of the 133 child soldiers who have been released to the transit centre since it opened in October 2003, ten (7.5%) have gone back to the LTTE. Of

these, six were boys and four girls. Six of the children were receiving reintegration support, including schooling and vocational training, one child ran away from the transit centre itself, and three of the children were reported to have returned due to family problems.



Keele/UNICEF

Former child recruits take part in education classes at the Kilinochchi transit centre.

The number of releases by the LTTE dropped dramatically in May and June 2004 with only 35 direct releases to children's families. The LTTE last released child soldiers to the Kilinochchi transit centre on 24 April 2004. The centre had been empty since 14 June. UNICEF has noted the cyclical nature of underage recruitment across the North East with recruitments and re-recruitments by the LTTE increasing dramatically in May and June.

UNICEF received reports of 86 children who were re-recruited by the LTTE during the reporting period and 402 children who were recruited for the first time – a total of 488 under-age recruitments⁵. Of these, 299 were boys (61%) and 189 were girls (39%). According to reports received by UNICEF, the youngest recruits were 11 years of age.

The total number of recruitments is likely to be higher. Not all families report the recruitment of their child to UNICEF for a variety of factors including, fear, their inability to secure a better future for their children outside the LTTE, or because they try to find alternative means to secure their release.

The North

A total of 275 children under 18 years of age were recruited by the LTTE in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar Districts during the reporting period. Of these, 12 were children who had been released and then re-recruited. Recruitment in Vavuniya was particularly high from April to June, with a total of 58 children recruited in Vavuniya District alone. The LTTE engaged in an intense recruitment campaign during these months, deploying cadres in every village, targeting children at school and in tuition classes and engaging in a high profile propaganda campaign, particularly at night. A total of 130 children were released from the ranks of the LTTE in all five districts in the north during the reporting period, 74 of them through the transit centre.

⁵ These numbers reflect reported cases of under-age recruitment, verified by UNICEF, backed up with proof of age documents and entered into the UNICEF database on under-age recruitment

The East

In Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee Districts, 167 children under the age of 18 years were recruited during the reporting period. Of these, 35 were re-recruits. As well as the releases and returns in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts described above, three groups of children were released from the LTTE in Trincomalee during the reporting period totalling 88 children. Thirty-five children were released on 21 March 2004, 40 children on 17 April, and 13 children on 8 June. As work on the transit centre in Trincomalee was not completed, children in the first two groups were released to a temporary centre in Trincomalee town. The last group of children was released directly to their families and the LTTE later issued release documents for all of them.

Advocacy

The ongoing recruitment by the LTTE and its failure to release any children to the transit centre in May and June is a serious breach of its commitments under the Action Plan. UNICEF has continued to advocate bilaterally and publicly with the LTTE to honour its obligations under the Action Plan. At the same time, UNICEF is also building alliances with community based organizations to protect children from child rights violations, including under-age recruitment, and to increase community advocacy efforts on behalf of children.

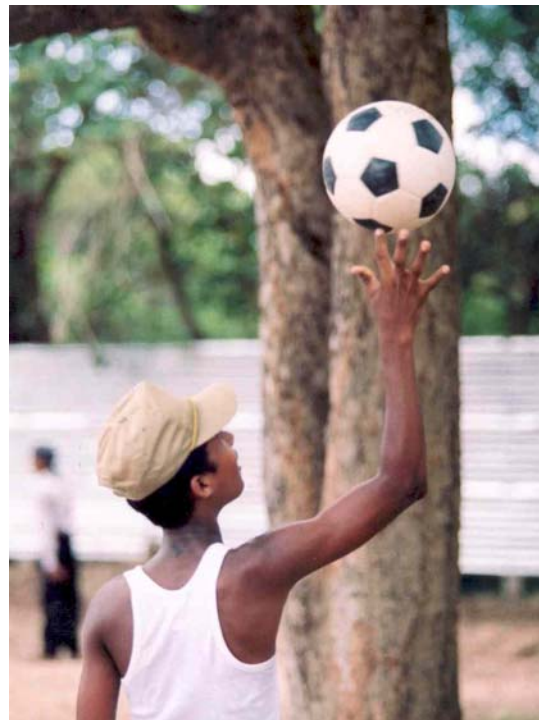
UNICEF met with high-ranking officials from the LTTE political wing in May and June 2004 and sought renewed assurances that the LTTE would cease all recruitment of children, publicize this policy in all recruitment notices and resume releases to the transit centre. Given the continued recruitment and the failure by the LTTE to make concrete progress on the steps set during the meetings, UNICEF issued a public statement on 26 June criticizing the LTTE for violating its commitments under the Action Plan. UNICEF called on the LTTE to take the following immediate steps:

- To honour its commitments under the Action Plan, specifically to end the recruitment and re-recruitment of all children under 18 years of age and to release all children within its ranks
- To ensure that the recruitment of over 18 year olds is organized and centralized. LTTE cadres should cease all roving recruitment at the village and community level, including in schools, and insist that new recruits register at central LTTE offices (this would avoid violent abductions and forcible recruitment)
- To ensure that all recruitment publicity information (leaflets, announcements from three wheelers), specify that the LTTE is excluding under 18 year olds from any type of recruitment
- To request proof of age for all young people volunteering to join the LTTE to ensure that children are not recruited by mistake
- To refer young people volunteering to join the LTTE to humanitarian services provided by UNICEF, SCiSL, TRO, ILO, UNDP and others
- To ensure that LTTE political wing leaders in each district meet with UNICEF Heads of Zone Offices once a month as a matter of practice to immediately resolve cases of underage recruitment locally
- To approve the publicity material for the Action Plan awareness campaign which has been stalled since January 2004

Reintegration Activities for All War-Affected Children

Despite the protection problems described above, reintegration activities have proceeded under the Action Plan with some notable progress. A major back-to-school drive has taken place in all eight districts of the North East. So far, a total of 6,751 children have enrolled back in school under the Action Plan and 43,881 children are benefiting from emergency catch-up-education classes. UNICEF has provided 11,599 children with school kits and is also providing material for school uniforms. WFP is running school-feeding programmes for 21,548 children in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts. An estimated 500 schools in the North East were damaged or completely destroyed during the war⁶. To facilitate children's return to school, UNICEF has helped to repair and reconstruct 241 of these school buildings and is supporting the training of teachers.

There has also been a major drive to repair and reconstruct the 55 health facilities that were completely destroyed and 49 that were not functioning in the North East⁷. To date, 42 Gramodaya Health Centres (GHCs) have been repaired or reconstructed. Many of the health facilities are poorly equipped and there is a dearth of trained medical staff. In order to address these problems, UNICEF has provided medical equipment and supported the training of medical personnel. UNICEF has also sought to improve the health of children and their families through the construction of water and sanitation facilities in 212 schools and 86 health centres in the war-affected areas.



L. Nadaraja/UNICEF

A former child soldier plays sports at the transit centre while receiving support to ease his transition from the LTTE back to his community.

Two hundred and thirty-four (234) children who have opted not to return to school are benefiting from vocational and skills training provided by ILO and its partner organizations. Some 197 families in need of income generation opportunities have been assessed by UNDP and its partner organizations for loans. To date, 22 families have been issued loans, although this number is likely to increase sharply in the coming months as UNDP completes its assessments. Thirty very vulnerable families have been assisted under UNHCR's programme for Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVI). Roughly 580 former child soldiers and their families are benefiting from social work support provided by SCiSL, while 410 children engaged in hazardous labour and street children have been assessed by TRO social workers. Thirty-one alternative care facilities in all eight districts of the

⁶ According to an inter-agency assessment in the North East at the time the Action Plan was initiated, 50,000 children were estimated to be out of school as a result of the conflict. See *Sri Lanka: Assessment of Needs in the Conflict Affected Areas May 2003* (supported by Asian Development Bank, United Nations and World Bank

⁷ *Ibid.*

North East are providing services to children under the Action Plan and 94 children have received psycho-social support.

There are, however, still some difficulties and challenges to address in the coming months. All partner agencies will need to continue to increase their staffing and infrastructure capacity and take on board new partner organizations to cope with the needs of the children under the Action Plan. UNICEF and the Zonal and Provincial Departments of Education must speed up their response to ensure that schools have the infrastructure, teachers and capacity to absorb such large numbers of children under the back-to-school drive and in catch-up-education classes.

There remains a tension between the emergency, individualized nature of the Action Plan referrals and the more holistic, developmental approach of the partner organizations. On the one hand, UNICEF protection staff, SCiSL and TRO social workers are concerned about the protection of children. Their priority is the immediate engagement of all children in reintegration activities to avoid re-recruitment. On the other hand, organizations like UNDP and ILO stress that income generation and vocational training programmes take time to set up and implement in order to be successful and sustainable. A community-based approach is the most effective and it is difficult to cater for individual children and their families scattered across wide distances. These organizations are



Wilkinson/UNICEF

Children receiving school kits. UNICEF has provided nearly 12,000 school kits for children during the reporting period.

exploring ways in which they can speed up their response and address the needs of more children under the Action Plan, while continuing to ensure that their programmes are sustainable and of a high quality.

In addition, families who are too vulnerable to qualify for a micro-finance loan, but not vulnerable enough to qualify for assistance under UNHCR's

programme for Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVI) are falling through the gap.

UNDP and its partner organizations are currently exploring ways in which they can assist them through a more flexible, community-based approach to income generation. As a start, UNDP is planning to set up five pilot Quick Impact Projects (QUIPs) in the East that will help communities to generate income through small-scale, community cash-for-work infrastructure schemes.

Furthermore, the success of reintegration activities depends on a safe and secure environment. Reintegration is seriously impeded by the current climate of continuing, and in some places violent, recruitment of children throughout the North East. Finally, more also needs to be done to reach all vulnerable children in the North East and not primarily former child soldiers.

New Partner Agencies under the Action Plan

In order to respond to the large-scale return of children in the East, new partner agencies have been incorporated into the Action Plan and were approved by the GoSL and the LTTE to work on the Action Plan. The international NGOs approved to work on the Action Plan are currently CARE, FORUT, GTZ, Oxfam, SCiSL, WUSC, World Vision and ZOA. National and local NGOs approved to work on the Action Plan are currently CARITAS, ESCO, Sarvodaya, SWOAD, TRO and Butterfly Gardens.

The lead agencies for each sector (ILO for vocational training; UNDP for income generation; UNICEF for social work, education, health, psycho-social services) have overall responsibility for coordination of activities under their sector. Regular sectoral meetings for partner organizations are held at the district and national level. Discussions are currently under way to define the exact terms of reference for the coordination roles of each lead agency, and to increase NGO representation at the technical coordination meeting.



Keele/UNICEF
Out of school children line up with their parents to register for special CUE classes in Eastern Sri Lanka

Budget Overview

All partner organizations working under the Action Plan have contributed resources both in terms of in-kind contributions such as staff, logistics and office space, and also programme resources. As the scale and scope of the Action Plan grows, there will be a need for additional resources for all partner agencies. A summary of budgets for the three major partners to the Action Plan – UNICEF, UNDP and ILO – is given below.

UNICEF

UNICEF's combined Action Plan expenditure in 2003 and estimated expenditure in 2004 and 2005 comes to US\$8.3 million. UNICEF has received a total donor contribution of US\$6.8 million towards the Action Plan. This leaves a budget gap of US\$1.5 million which UNICEF hopes to meet by the beginning of 2005.

UNDP

UNDP has integrated its activities under the Action Plan into its ongoing Transition Programme in the North East. The original budget for UNDP's Transition Programme was US\$4 million. Within this budget, UNDP has currently allocated US\$68,000 specifically for Action Plan activities. All other support to the Action Plan is integrated into existing projects under the Transition Programme. As the number of referrals increase and UNDP expands into new areas, such as QUIPs, there will be a need for additional funding, staffing and logistical support. UNDP is seeking to mobilize an additional

US\$750,000 to fund these activities. UNDP is also making a significant in-kind contribution to the Action Plan through the provision of staff, transportation, and office costs.

ILO

The original budget for the vocational training component of the Action Plan of US\$2,220,000 has been revised by ILO to US\$3,900,000. ILO has been able to raise US\$1,050,000 with further commitments of US\$800,000. This leaves a funding gap of just over US\$2,000,000.

Recommendations

This is a critical phase for the Action Plan. Unless there is a complete cessation of all violence and a restoration of peace and stability throughout the North East children will never be fully safe and will be unable to resume normal lives. The future of the Action Plan depends on the willingness of the GoSL and the LTTE to re-engage in the peace process in a genuine and meaningful way.

Some key recommendations for all parties to the Action Plan for the next six month period include:

To the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE

- Take immediate steps to re-engage in the peace process in order to reach a negotiated settlement that will create a safe and stable climate for all children in the North East

To the LTTE

- The LTTE should honour its commitments under the Action Plan and immediately cease all under-age recruitment and release all children within its ranks
- Actively publicize this commitment and ensure that all recruitment notices and publicity (including leaflets, radio and trishaw announcements) clearly state that it will not accept under 18 year olds in its ranks
- Verify the age of all young people who volunteer to join its ranks to ensure that they are over 18 years of age and cease all recruitment activities in villages, schools and other community places where children are present
- Cease all forcible recruitment and abductions
- Immediately release all children within its ranks for whom UNICEF has provided birth certificates as proof of age
- Refer young people volunteering to join its ranks to humanitarian services provided by UNICEF, SCiSL, TRO, ILO, UNDP and others
- LTTE political wing leaders should meet with UNICEF staff at least once a month to discuss issues relating to the recruitment and release of children
- Immediately approve the publicity material for the Action Plan awareness campaign which has been stalled since January 2004

To the Government of Sri Lanka

- Continue to work with UNICEF to ensure the safe passage of released child soldiers between LTTE and government controlled areas

- Continue to work with a range of organizations to ensure that schools have the necessary infrastructure, teachers and capacity to absorb the large numbers of children who are enrolling back in school and in catch-up-education classes
- Urgently address the need for secondary education in remote areas
- Continue to work with a range of organizations to increase the capacity of health care facilities in the North East to respond to the reintegration needs of children and their families
- Continue to work with a range of organizations to strengthen training opportunities for teachers, health and social workers to improve the quality of education, health care and social work in the North East
- Continue to liaise with UNICEF protection officers to ensure that children who are arrested by the police have full access to justice, their cases are resolved swiftly and fairly and that detention is used as a last resort
- Amend the Prevention of Terrorism Act to ensure that it does not apply to children under 18 years of age and continue to work with civil society groups to develop a legal framework that addresses questions of transitional justice
- Work with the national Human Rights Commission and UNICEF to increase training opportunities for police and army officers on child recruitment

To the Action Plan Partner Organizations

- All partners to the Action Plan should continue to increase their staffing and logistical capacity in order to respond more quickly and effectively to the needs of children and their families under the Action Plan. This will require additional funding, in particular for ILO which faces a significant budget short-fall.
- Increase the number of partner organizations to assist with the implementation of the Action Plan
- Balance the individualized, emergency reintegration needs of children under the Action Plan, and a more community-based, developmental approach to vocational training and income generation. This will enable broader coverage and more sustainable programmes
- There is a need for additional and more specialized training by UNICEF, UNDP, ILO and UNHCR for SCiSL and TRO social workers in order to ensure better quality and more targeted referrals
- Continue to explore appropriate ways to address the needs of those families who are too vulnerable to qualify for a loan and not vulnerable enough to qualify for UNHCR assistance
- UNICEF should take immediate steps to ensure that supplies and vehicles for partner organizations are released promptly and without delay
- Partner organizations should continue to build alliances with community based organizations and develop strategies to protect children from child rights violations, including under-age recruitment

To Donor Governments

- Increase the resources and assistance available to war-affected children in the North East
- Provide additional funds to meet the funding gaps of partner organizations under the Action Plan, in particular ILO
- Press both the GoSL and the LTTE to re-engage in the peace process

- Call on the LTTE to honour its commitments under the Action Plan, immediately cease all recruitment of children under 18 years of age and release all children in its ranks

Action Plan Progress Report

1. CHILD RIGHTS TRAINING

Overview

Under the Action Plan, there is a commitment to conduct training on child rights, including an introduction to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, throughout the North East of Sri Lanka. The training is provided to the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), members of the LTTE, armed forces, police and judiciary, local and national NGOs involved in the Action Plan and civil society organizations working with children. The training targets those in leadership positions in the community, including local government officials, religious leaders, police, teachers, school principals and NGO staff. It is hoped that once trained, community leaders can provide ongoing monitoring at a community level and both advise and report on violations when they occur. UNICEF provides training to the LTTE, SLA and the police and NGOs provide training to civil society groups.

Progress and Developments

The following activities took place during the reporting period:

- Development of a training manual in English, Sinhalese and Tamil
- Training of trainers for implementing partners in the North East
- KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice) baseline survey carried out by World Vision in the North East to ascertain knowledge and awareness of child rights
- Community-based training programmes on child rights
- Child rights training for LTTE military and political wings, and for LTTE lawyers, judges and police

A coordination group, consisting of representatives of the GoSL, Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), Human Rights Commission (HRC), UN agencies and child focused NGOs was set up to coordinate and monitor all activities. The group has been meeting on a monthly basis during the reporting period.

Development of a training manual

Under the guidance of the coordination group, SCiSL has developed a manual for basic child rights training at the community level. The first edition of the manual was in Tamil, with an English translation. It is currently being translated and adapted into Sinhalese.

The manual was field-tested in Kalmunai in the East and Kilinochchi in the North before it was finalized. The final version was printed in June 2004 and has been distributed to partner organizations in all eight districts in the North East. Training manuals have also been shared with the Human Rights Commission and with all Child Rights Promotion Officers (CRPOs) and Probation Officers (POs) working in the North East.

Training of trainers for implementing partners in the North East

Training of trainers sessions were conducted in February and March 2004 at three locations in the North East - Batticaloa, Kilinochchi and Vavuniya. Participants included representatives of implementing partners, CRPOs, POs, police officers and NGO staff seeking to improve their training capacity. In total 75 people have been trained as child rights trainers under the programme.

KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice) survey

As part of their contribution to the implementation of the Action Plan, World Vision carried out a KAP survey in areas of the North East where they have a presence. The survey was intended to give a base-line knowledge of the general awareness of child rights among the target beneficiaries before initiating the training programmes. The KAP survey was conducted in May 2004 in Eravupattu and Vellaveli in Batticaloa District; Mannar and Nanattan in Mannar District; and in Kilinochchi. A total of 93 people participated in the survey, including police, teachers, school principals, NGO personnel, health workers, religious leaders, and community leaders.

The survey confirmed that 100% of respondents believed that children have rights. When asked to list three children's rights, the most commonly cited were education and freedom of expression. 82% of the respondents stated that they had heard of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The most commonly cited example of child abuse given by respondents in all four locations was child labour/ domestic aid, followed by sexual abuse. The majority of participants stated that incidents of domestic child abuse would never be known by others in the community, although in one location more respondents replied that they would report an incident to the police. 74% of respondents stated that they had witnessed child abuse, although the type of abuse differed in each location (in one location the majority of respondents cited child soldiers as the most common abuse witnessed, while in the other three locations the respondents cited child labour/ work as a domestic aid; one area also cited sexual abuse). In two areas the majority of respondents said that they reported the abuse they witnessed, while in the other two areas the majority of respondents did not report. The majority of respondents felt that it was important to raise awareness to encourage more people to report child abuse.

Community training programmes

Community training programmes have been initiated throughout the North East. Organizations with the capacity to implement child rights training have been identified and proposals have been developed. The training will target community leaders and local government officials, although each district will identify those groups most in need of child rights training and devise its programme accordingly. The training will be conducted by a range of partner organizations.

Some highlights from the different districts in the North East include:

In **Jaffna**, the Human Rights Commission will be conducting training sessions for more than 900 people including members of the army, judiciary, political parties, prison staff and police officers. In addition the District Child Protection Committee (DCPC) is focusing on training religious leaders, media personnel and government officials. Training for 30 social service officials have been conducted in Jaffna.

In **Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu**, the Centre for Women's Development and Rehabilitation (CWDR) is coordinating training conducted by several different partners for teachers, police, community leaders, NGO staff and managers of children's homes. In total 800-1,000 persons will receive training. By the end of June 2004, CWDR had completed five training sessions for local NGOs, community based organizations and school teachers. Two more training sessions are planned for local NGOs and children's home staff in July 2004. Three training sessions were held for education staff, pre-school teachers and community leaders and NGO staff in June 2004. Further training for Zonal Department of Education (ZDE) staff and local NGOs is planned in July 2004.

In **Vavuniya** the Rural Development Foundation has initiated a training programme for 600 community leaders, village heads, government officials and community activists. The Human Rights Commission will conduct training for the army and other armed groups.

In **Mannar** the ZDEs for Mannar and Madhu will train more than 700 teachers and Mannar Women's Development Federation will train close to 1000 members of the Women Rural Development Societies. Sewalanka, a local NGO, will conduct training for local government officials, NGO workers and rural development societies.

The Provincial Department of Social Welfare, based in **Trincomalee**, is co-coordinating training for all CRPOs and all POs across the **North East**. The training will be given in three sessions of three days each, starting in August 2004. The next round of training will take place in September, and the final training in November 2004. All POs and CRPOs will receive training on interview methods, child-friendly ways of working, and child protection. The aim of the training is to help POs and CRPOs incorporate child rights concepts into their daily work.

In **Batticaloa**, child rights training components have been incorporated into two larger projects carried out by the DCPC and the Probation Department. The trainings will target health professionals, police, doctors, teachers, principals and children's homes managers. In February 2004, a Tamil medium training of child rights trainers took place in Batticaloa. Twenty three participants came from Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee and included police women and child desk officers⁸, POs and CRPOs, Samurdhi managers⁹, representatives from the Human Rights Commission, human rights lawyers and NGO sector staff. Following this,

⁸Special desks in police stations in government controlled areas have been established to deal with specific issues relating to women and children. Female police officers are trained in women and child friendly procedures to deal with cases of child and sexual abuse, crimes against children and sexual and gender based violence. An assistant superintendent of police has been allocated for each district to coordinate the activities of the women and children desks. There are seven police stations with women and children's desks in Batticaloa and 14 in Ampara. UNICEF is providing support to the women's and children's officers in Batticaloa and Ampara.

⁹ Samurdhi is a long term government scheme focusing on development and poverty alleviation under the Samurdhi ministry. Samurdhi animators (niyamakas) are based at the community level in government controlled areas. They support children's clubs, make financial support payments to chronically poor families and get involved in community mobilization and awareness building. Samurdhi managers coordinate the activities of the animators.

a child rights trainers network was established by the participants of the workshop. As a first step, the network has identified areas of need based on reports of child labour, child abuse and other child rights violations. They are also looking at how to tackle child rights issues in a more holistic manner. Trainers have organized child rights training sessions in schools and village communities.

In **Ampara**, the Social Welfare Organization Ampara District, (SWOAD) and the Human Rights Commission will be involved in conducting training for community leaders, teachers, school based counselors and principals.

In most districts the training programmes were initiated in May or June 2004 and will continue for one year. There was a slight delay in implementation due to the fact that a training manual had to be developed to ensure quality of the trainings which was not foreseen when the Action Plan was developed. However, the programme will cover at least three times the number of beneficiaries originally planned under the Action Plan.

Training for LTTE military and political wing

Child rights training for the LTTE is conducted by UNICEF staff due to the sensitivity of the topics covered and the high rank of many of the participants. The trainings are conducted at mutually agreed times between UNICEF and the LTTE. They cover general awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also general protection issues, such as underage recruitment, the importance of family unity, psycho-social well-being and gender based violence. During the reporting period the following child rights training sessions have been conducted:

- On 13 February 2004, child rights training was conducted for 35 high ranking LTTE military wing cadres in Batticaloa District. Earlier training was held for 35 LTTE political wing officials in Batticaloa in October 2003
- On 25 February 2004, child rights training was conducted for 30 middle-level LTTE military wing cadres in Trincomalee District
- In May 2004, a three-day training on human rights and humanitarian law was organized by UNHCR for LTTE police officers in Kilinochchi, including a one day session dedicated to child rights facilitated by UNICEF. A similar training in Kilinochchi was conducted in 2003 for LTTE lawyers and judges.

Constraints and Future Plans

The child rights training manual is currently being translated into Sinhalese. The final printed version is expected to be distributed in September 2004. SCiSL is also planning to organize two additional Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions for partner organizations working in Sinhalese areas of the North East in September 2004.

The implementation of training programmes in Sinhalese areas, mainly in Ampara, Trincomalee and Vavuniya Districts, commenced later as the coordination group decided to develop the manual in Tamil first. Discussions with partners are on-going to ensure rapid implementation of the programme as soon as the manual is available and the TOTs have been conducted.

At the time of the Tamil TOTs, not all implementing organizations and/or trainers had been identified. UNICEF will monitor the programme closely and ensure that all trainers have the knowledge and experience needed to ensure high quality training. If needed, additional TOTs will be conducted.

At the end of the project the KAP survey will be conducted again in those communities covered by the programme to ascertain the impact of the training.

2. AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Overview

A key feature of the Action Plan has been to raise awareness of child rights throughout the North East. This is achieved through child rights training, as discussed above, and a comprehensive awareness raising campaign implemented by UNICEF in conjunction with TRO, the LTTE and other partner organizations.

The awareness campaign is comprised of two main parts:

- Awareness campaign on the commitments of all parties under the Action Plan
- Community-based child rights awareness campaign

Action Plan awareness campaign

The objective of this component is to raise community awareness of the commitments by all parties to the Action Plan. These include commitments to:

- end child labour
- prevent sexual exploitation
- cease the recruitment of children under 18 years of age
- ensure the care and reintegration of returning child soldiers
- promote child rights in the context of peace and reconciliation
- educate parents of their responsibilities to report child rights violations (including under age recruitment and child labour)

According to the Action Plan, these messages should be agreed upon by UNICEF, the GoSL and the LTTE and disseminated through posters, road-side signs, radio broadcasts and leaflets.

Community-based child rights awareness raising campaign

The community-based child rights awareness campaign targets community leaders, youth workers and teachers, amongst others, and is intended to develop an understanding of international and national child rights norms within the community. Information is disseminated through a media and poster campaign, school programmes (including drama and school competitions), production of videos, community workshops and a house-to-house campaign. The awareness campaign covers issues such as awareness raising for parents on child abuse and exploitation; life skills awareness for children; and mechanisms for monitoring and reporting child rights violations, including under-age recruitment.

The community awareness campaign is intended to be implemented by a variety of actors including, UNICEF, TRO, appropriate local government authorities (child protection, education, vocational training authorities), religious and community leaders and the ILO.

Progress and Developments

Action Plan awareness campaign

A mass media awareness campaign has been developed to disseminate information about the Action Plan through posters, leaflets and radio broadcasts (*see Annex 3 for example of awareness campaign posters*). Although the messages were approved by the Peace Secretariat of the GoSL in November 2003, UNICEF has been waiting for LTTE approval since January 2004 and the campaign has been stalled. The LTTE's delay in approving the messages has severely hindered this component of the Action Plan.

School-based child rights awareness campaign

A schools-based information campaign was piloted in Jaffna and Kilinochchi in 2004, implemented by the Zonal Education Office and TRO with support from UNICEF.

Jaffna

As one of the two districts piloting the school-based awareness campaign, a steering committee was established in October 2003 comprising of the ZDE, TRO and UNICEF. The steering committee met twice to determine the direction of the campaign. It was agreed that the campaign should be conducted by education staff and should focus not only on child rights, but also on their responsibilities. Training of trainers workshops were held for teachers in the district in February 2004 and for divisional education staff in May 2004. In March and April 2004, TRO and the ZDE organized 17 one day workshops for 610 teachers throughout the district. One teacher was appointed in each zone to coordinate the awareness campaign.

As part of the awareness campaign art and drama competitions on child rights were initiated. The art competition was held at the district and zonal levels in June 2004 and the drama competition is due to be held in July and August.

50,000 leaflets on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) were printed for TRO to distribute in schools as part of the campaign, as well as 2,000 CRC booklets in Tamil for school libraries.

Kilinochchi

TRO has taken the lead in coordinating the schools awareness campaign in Kilinochchi. The project was launched in February 2004. TRO facilitated six one-day workshops for 207 school teachers and principals to raise awareness of the Action Plan and provide training on how to report child rights violations. Each workshop had approximately 25 – 35 participants. UNICEF staff members provided training on the CRC at each workshop and teachers were given training on how to conduct school based drama competitions promoting the theme of child rights. In March 2004, workshops were held in Poonagary and Kandawalai and a further workshop on child rights was conducted in Kilinochchi in May 2004. TRO reported that it had trained an additional 648 teachers from across the district on the CRC.

UNICEF handed over 30,000 CRC leaflets in Tamil to the TRO to distribute in the schools. TRO has distributed 10–15 leaflets for each class room from grade 2

to grade 12 (totaling just over 9,500 leaflets). The art competition on child rights was conducted for 25 schools and 144 children and the drama competition is due to be completed by the end of July 2004 in 17 schools for 248 children.

Constraints and Future Plans

The major constraint in the Action Plan awareness campaign has been the failure of the LTTE to approve the core messages and hence the stalling of the campaign. To counteract this problem, UNICEF has decided to publish its own awareness raising materials which will be disseminated at the community level.

Although the schools-based child rights awareness campaign has got off to a good start in both Kilinochchi and Jaffna, there have been some difficulties in communication, and as a result not all schools and principals are aware of the existence or purpose of the campaign. For example, only 600 teachers have received training in Jaffna, out of a total of more than 7,000 teachers in the district. While in Kilinochchi, only 25 schools out of 95 took part in the art competition and only 17 schools out of 95 took part in the drama competition. UNICEF is currently considering new partners for the expansion of the schools-based campaign to the other districts.

3. MONITORING AND PREVENTION OF VIOLATIONS OF CHILD RIGHTS

Overview

As part of its commitment to the Action Plan, the LTTE pledged to cease all recruitment of children under 18 years of age and to release all children within its ranks. Since the Action Plan was signed, however, UNICEF has received and verified reports of 1,321 children who have been recruited by the LTTE, 488 of these were during the reporting period¹⁰ (see Annex 4 for graphs on under-age recruitment). This is a serious breach of the LTTE's commitments under the Action Plan.

Recruitment by the LTTE: January – June 2004

2004	Re-recruitment	Recruitment
January	10	52
February	8	74
March	4	29
April	9	69
May	26	97
June	29	81
TOTAL	86	402

TOTAL RECRUITMENT: 488

¹⁰ This number only reflects those cases of child recruitment reported to and verified by UNICEF. The actual number is likely to be higher.

UNICEF has continued to advocate bilaterally and publicly with the LTTE to honour its obligations under the Action Plan. At the same time, UNICEF is also building alliances with community based organizations to protect children from child rights violations, including under-age recruitment, and to increase community advocacy efforts on behalf of children.

UNICEF met with high-ranking officials from the LTTE political wing in May and June 2004 and sought renewed assurances that the LTTE would cease all recruitment of children, publicize this policy in all recruitment notices and resume releases to the transit centre. When the LTTE failed to meet any of the concrete steps set during the meeting on 19 June, UNICEF issued a public statement on 26 June criticizing the LTTE for violating its commitments under the Action Plan. UNICEF called on the LTTE to take the following immediate steps:

- To honour its commitments under the Action Plan, specifically to cease all underage recruitment and secure the release of child soldiers
- To end all recruitment and re-recruitment of all children under 18 years of age and to release all child soldiers within its ranks
- To ensure that the recruitment of over 18 year olds is organized and centralized. LTTE cadres should cease all roving recruitment at the village and community level, including in schools, and insist that new recruits register at central LTTE offices (this would avoid violent abductions and forcible recruitment)
- To ensure that all recruitment publicity information (leaflets, announcements from three wheelers), specify that the LTTE is excluding under 18 year olds from any type of recruitment
- To request proof of age for all young people volunteering to join the LTTE to ensure that children are not recruited by mistake
- To refer young people volunteering to join the LTTE to humanitarian services provided by UNICEF, SCiSL, TRO, ILO, UNDP and others
- To ensure that LTTE political wing leaders in each district meet with UNICEF Heads of Zone Offices once a month as a matter of practice to immediately resolve cases of underage recruitment locally
- To approve the publicity material for the Action Plan awareness campaign which has been stalled since January 2004

Progress and Developments

UNICEF has primary responsibility for the monitoring and prevention of child rights violations, including under-age recruitment. In order to carry out this task, UNICEF has a total of nine international staff and 14 national staff (three staff based in Colombo and 20 based in the field) who have responsibility for protection including monitoring child rights.

Parents whose children have been recruited by the LTTE (both voluntarily and involuntarily) are encouraged to report to UNICEF either directly, or through other international agencies, such as the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) and UNHCR. UNICEF verifies all reported cases and manages a database of under-age recruitment, which is updated when the child's status changes. The database provides an accurate record of known cases of recruitment and has proven to be an effective advocacy tool for UNICEF protection staff to use with the LTTE. Wherever possible, UNICEF tries to acquire birth certificates for children under 18 years of age recruited by the LTTE. These are presented to the LTTE as proof of the child's age and UNICEF presses the LTTE to release all

these children. Over 1,000 birth certificates were presented to the LTTE in 2004. UNICEF is still waiting for the release of the vast majority of these children.

UNICEF staff also responds to other reports of harassment by the LTTE, police or SLA and follows up on cases of children who are held in detention.

The East

Following the split in the LTTE in the East in March 2004 and fighting between the break-away faction led by the LTTE's former eastern commander, Colonel Karuna, and the LTTE, the situation has remained very unstable. UNICEF staff in Batticaloa and Ampara have continued to monitor the situation closely with a special focus on under-age recruitment. Although recruitment in the East was lower in the months of March and April, it accelerated again in May and June 2004. UNICEF staff received 57 reports of recruitment or re-recruitment in May and June in these two districts alone.

The reports of recruitment were of an increasingly violent nature in May and June. UNICEF protection staff received reports of LTTE cadres abducting children on their way to and from school, from outside school buildings and at sports meetings. Families reported that armed LTTE cadres had come to their houses in the middle of the night and surrounded their homes. When family members tried to resist, they were physically beaten, in some cases resulting in the need for medical treatment. In some cases, other family members were detained by the LTTE when they refused to hand over the child. Many of the children targeted were the same as those who returned home in April 2004 following the split in the LTTE.

The priority for most families has been to protect their children from re-recruitment. Many have been afraid to send their children back to school or to allow them to participate in other reintegration activities, for fear of re-recruitment. Instead, families have been seeking other protection mechanisms, including sending their children away to stay with distant relatives or friends in other districts – where they may face different but equally serious protection problems; or marrying their children at an early age to avoid recruitment.

UNICEF has re-assigned social workers who had been intended to work at the un-opened transit centre in Batticaloa to help refer cases to SCiSL. A database consultant has also been recruited to maintain the data on the 1,800 children who returned from the LTTE in April and the 412 children from Batticaloa and Ampara currently known to be with the LTTE.

The North

A total of 275 children under 18 years of age were recruited by the LTTE in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar Districts during the reporting period. Of these, 12 were children who had been released and then re-recruited.

Recruitment in Vavuniya was particularly high from April to June, with a total of 58 children recruited in Vavuniya District alone. The LTTE engaged in an intense recruitment campaign during these months, deploying cadres in every village, targeting children at school and in tuition classes and engaging in a high profile propaganda campaign, particularly at night. At the same time, a total of 130 children were released from the ranks of the LTTE with official release papers in all five districts, 74 of them through the transit centre.

Monitoring other child rights violations

UNICEF has developed a child rights monitoring database to document wider aspects of child rights violations, including child abuse, child labour and street children. UNICEF will coordinate with other agencies to gather reports on violations. Protection staff will start entering violations into the database on a monthly basis in September and a report on this will be available at the end of the year. Any general protection issues that UNICEF receives that are not related to under-age recruitment are referred directly to the relevant authorities for follow-up action.

Constraints and Future Plans

The major constraint for this component of the Action Plan has been the increasing and violent nature of the recruitment of children by the LTTE, particularly in the East of the country. Not only does continuing recruitment of children and harassment of their families undermine the LTTE's commitment under the Action Plan to cease all child recruitment, but it also seriously hinders reintegration activities. Many families are afraid to send their children to school or vocational training for fear that they may be re-recruited. In some districts, weekly meetings between UNICEF and the LTTE have had limited impact – as witnessed by the flagrant increase in recruitment.

UNICEF is working to build alliances with community based organizations in order to develop strategies to protect children from child rights violations, including under-age recruitment.

4. RELEASE AND REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS

Overview

Under the Action Plan, the LTTE committed to cease all recruitment of children and to formally release child soldiers back to their families and communities. In cases where there were no apparent protection problems, it was agreed that children could be released directly to their families. Children whose families can not be easily identified, or those with particular protection or psycho-social problems, are released to a transit centre where they stay for a maximum of three months. During this time a team of social workers carry out assessments and make recommendations for the reunification of children with their families. In the event that children can not be reunified with their families, alternative care options are identified.

The transit centre in the North, based in Kilinochchi, opened in October 2003 and is co-managed by UNICEF and TRO. UNICEF has maintained a 24 hour presence at the transit centre with national and international staff. The transit

centres in Batticaloa and Trincomalee were never opened due to an apparent lack of commitment by the LTTE, demonstrated through the low number of releases to the transit centre in the North, and the ongoing recruitment of children throughout the North East.

Progress and Developments

Overall trends

A significant number of children have been formally released by the LTTE since the inception of the Action Plan and release rates by the LTTE have more than doubled since the Action Plan was signed. 278 children were released from June 2002 to June 2003, while 639 children were released from June 2003 to June 2004 under the Action Plan. 78 children have been released to the transit centre in Kilinochchi during the reporting period and a total of 133 child soldiers have been released to the transit centre since it opened in October 2003. Of these, ten children (7.5%) have gone back to the LTTE, of whom six were boys and four girls. Six of the children were receiving reintegration support, including schooling and vocational training, one child ran away from the transit centre itself, and three of the children were reported to have returned due to family problems.

In addition to the formal releases, over 1,600 children spontaneously returned home following fighting between different factions of the LTTE in the East in April 2004 but have not been issued formal release letters by the LTTE.¹¹

However, the number of releases by the LTTE dropped dramatically in May and June 2004. The LTTE last released child soldiers to the Kilinochchi transit centre on 24 April and on 30 June, at the end of the reporting period, the transit centre had been empty since 14 June.

This component of the Action Plan depends on the commitment of the LTTE both to continue to release children and not to re-recruit children once they are reunified with their families. Without such a commitment, the work that all Action Plan partner agencies can achieve is limited.

A summary of releases during the reporting period is provided in the following table:

¹¹ A total of 1,800 children left the LTTE in April 2004 following the split in the LTTE. Of these, 136 children had received official release documents by the end of June.

Table showing official release of children by the LTTE from January to June 2004

2004	Number of reports of Children released directly to their homes by LTTE	Number of children Released to transit centre by LTTE
January	11	14
February	20	23
March	49	13
April	256	28
May	13	0
June	22	0
TOTAL	371	78

NB: The April figure includes children who were released following the split in the LTTE in the East and who received formal release letters from the LTTE. UNICEF has registered over 1,600 cases of children who returned home in April. These numbers are not fully reflected in the table as they were not issued with formal release letters by the LTTE.

Situation in the North: Kilinochchi transit centre

The transit centre for released children in the North was opened in Kilinochchi on 3 October 2003. Since its opening, only 133 children have been released to the transit centre by the LTTE and reintegrated into the community. Once families are identified, the majority of children are able to return home from the transit centre within fourteen days of release. During their stay at the transit centre, children are assessed by TRO and UNICEF social workers and information is provided to SCiSL who carry out follow-up work with the children and families in their communities when they are released. Children who face serious protection concerns may spend up to three months in the transit centre to allow for a fuller assessment of the support they and their family may need. Children who are unable to return home due to serious protection concerns are placed in alternative care with full consultation with the child and their family.

The Kilinochchi transit centre is co-managed by UNICEF and TRO. TRO has responsibility for the day to day management of the transit centre, including procuring supplies, managing the vehicles, health care and security. TRO also has responsibility for child care and social activities. UNICEF has responsibility for the social work process and for maintaining the database, arranging children's movement in and out of the district, organizing education assessments and for ensuring that children have the necessary documentation to enable them to travel freely and settle in their communities. Files are kept on every child admitted to the transit centre and the information maintained on the UNICEF database.

TRO facilitators are responsible for activities at the transit centre. The children attend classes on a daily basis. A local NGO conducts an education assessment of each child in order to place them in the appropriate class when they return home. Children can participate in a wide range of recreational activities supervised by the facilitators. There is a multi-denominational worship centre where children can practice their religion and celebrate religious festivals.

Trained counsellors from a local NGO provide individual and group counselling for children at the centre. Many children who were reluctant to return home change their minds after counselling.

Transit centre staff and social workers discuss each child's case during the child care reviews to determine their readiness for reunification and reintegration. Decisions take into account the views of the child, their family and transit centre staff. Parents' visits to the transit centre greatly assist in helping children make the decision to return home. Only in serious protection cases would children be placed in alternative care. Once children leave the transit centre, responsibility for their reintegration passes to Save the Children, and TRO and UNICEF social workers no longer conduct activities with those children. This is very important to mark a break between the militarized past of the child and their future away from the LTTE.

Situation in the East:

The sudden and unexpected release and return home of over 1,800 children following the split in the LTTE in April 2004 has put enormous strain on the capacity and resources of all partner agencies in Batticaloa and Ampara. 136 of the children received official release documents from the LTTE. In response to the return, UNICEF, supported by SCiSL, set up mobile centres throughout Batticaloa and Ampara to register the children.

Three groups of children have been released from the LTTE in Trincomalee since March 2004. 35 children were released on 21 March and 40 children on 17 April, 2004 with official release letters from the LTTE. A further 13 children were released directly to their families on 8 June and UNICEF later received release documents from the LTTE. Work on the Trincomalee transit centre has not yet been completed and the children in the first two batches were therefore released to a temporary shelter in Trincomalee town.

Constraints and Future Plans

Overall challenges and constraints

- The continuing recruitment by the LTTE and consistently small number of releases, particularly in May and June 2004, serve to undermine this component of the Action Plan
- The large return of children in the East, following the split in the LTTE, put an enormous strain on reintegration activities
- There is a need to ensure a more community-based approach to reintegration activities. This will enable broader coverage and more sustainable programmes and help to ensure that all members of the community are assisted and not just former child soldiers and their families

The North: Kilinochchi transit centre

- Since it was opened, the transit centre has never met its capacity of 120 children and has been consistently under-utilized
- The LTTE last released children to the centre on 24 April 2004, and since 17 June 2004, the transit centre has been empty. This raises serious questions about the commitment of the LTTE to continue to release

children. At the current time personnel from the transit centre have been re-deployed to assist in other areas of UNICEF and TRO work

- Partner agencies have not developed sufficient capacity to cope with referrals from SCiSL and TRO causing considerable delays in the placement of children in vocational training and income generation programmes

The East

- The rapid and unexpected nature of the large scale return of children in April 2004 presented a significant challenge to UNICEF and its partner agencies under the Action Plan
- Partner agencies have had to rapidly increase their capacity to respond to the urgent reintegration needs of the children
- Partner agencies will have to continue to grow in capacity to cope with the large number of referrals and follow-up work
- Further funding is likely to be needed to cover all referral activities
- With so much attention focused on increasing the capacity of referral agencies in Batticaloa and Ampara, less attention has been paid to the situation in Trincomalee

5. MICRO-CREDIT AND INCOME GENERATION

Overview

Under the Action Plan, SCiSL and TRO social workers can refer families for micro-finance or income generation assistance. UNDP is responsible for coordinating this component of the Action Plan. SCiSL and TRO social workers carry out initial assessments based on interviews with the child and family to determine whether or not they would benefit from income generation assistance. The social workers complete a referral form including relevant information for UNDP (such as socio-economic and family background, and income-generation potential).

Once a case is referred to UNDP they, or the partner agency, will review the referral to determine whether or not the family is suitable for micro-finance support. Sometimes this requires additional home visits to the family. UNDP then attempts to match families with partner organizations with micro-credit schemes in their area. The implementing partner then meets with the family to discuss the terms and conditions of the micro-finance loan and determine whether the family is able to accept these conditions. The loan qualification criteria are set by the different partner organizations. Most of the organizations have interest rates of between 12 – 18% on loan repayments. Once the loan is issued, UNDP and their partner organizations provide follow-up to ensure that families are saving and investing appropriately

Successful and sustainable micro-finance schemes can not be implemented over night. It can often take several months of intensive assessments, orientation and training before a family is ready to receive a loan. It may then take several more months before they can start to reap any benefits from this assistance.

Progress and Developments

Assessments and referrals

Former child soldiers referred to UNDP

District	No. Referrals	No. IG Assessments	Waiting for loan	Rejected	Received loans
Kilinochchi/ Mullaitivu	27	26	18	0	9
Jaffna	10	10	6	0	4
Vavuniya/ Mannar	19	17	1	8	1
Batticaloa/ Ampara	68	0	0	0	0
Trincomalee	38	34	14	20	0
TOTAL	162	87	39	28	14

Other vulnerable children referred to UNDP

District	No. of Referrals	No. IG Assessments	Waiting for loan	Rejected	Received loans
Kilinochchi/ Mullaitivu-	-	-	-	-	-
Jaffna	32	32	21	3	8
Vavuniya/ Mannar	30	30	27	3	0
Batticaloa/ Ampara	58	0	0	0	0
Trincomalee	53	48	7	2	0
TOTAL	173	110	55	8	8

Due to the time lag between the SCiSL family visits, assessments and final referrals to service providers, UNDP received most referrals in June 2004, at the end of the reporting period. Of the 335 cases referred to UNDP in the first six months of 2004, 81% of the cases (270 cases) were referred to UNDP at the end of June 2004. This was especially the case in Batticaloa and Ampara, where no cases were referred to UNDP until the end of June. However, there were also delays in providing families with loans in some districts in the North (in particular, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu), where referrals were made earlier than in the East. Of the 335 cases referred to UNDP, 162 were families of former child soldiers and 173 were families of other vulnerable children. In Jaffna, Trincomalee and Vavuniya and Mannar there were a higher number of other vulnerable families referred to UNDP than families of child soldiers.

UNDP and their partners had completed 197 assessments (59 % of the cases) in all eight districts at the end of the reporting period. Of these, a total of 22 families were issued with loans (14 families of former child soldiers and 8 families of other vulnerable children). A further 94 families were found to be eligible and were waiting for the issuance of a loan at the end of the reporting period (39 families of former child soldiers and 55 other families). 36 families were rejected for a loan (28 families of former child soldiers and 8 other

families). The highest rejection rates were in Trincomalee District (20 families of former child soldiers and 2 other families).

The eligibility for loans differs widely from district to district depending on the implementing partner. For example, in some cases, families are disqualified on the grounds that they are already receiving loans under pre-existing micro-finance schemes. Some beneficiaries do not want a loan and some have an income above the required level. In others cases, families do not qualify for loans because of extreme poverty, for example families living on food stamps or families in camps for the internally displaced who do not have access to productive resources. Some families do not have the necessary skills or capacity to repay a loan, while others are disqualified because of social problems such as alcohol abuse, which would hinder loan repayment, or because they have previously defaulted on a loan repayment. In some cases, UNDP or its partner organization has been unable to find the family, despite several attempts.

UNDP has identified the need for more intensive training for SCiSL and TRO social workers to ensure that families who clearly will not qualify for a loan (for example, those with pre-existing loans, or those who are obviously too vulnerable to re-pay loans and should be referred to UNHCR) are not referred for micro-finance assistance. UNDP is particularly concerned that there should be clear criteria for TRO social workers who refer vulnerable families for income generation. Better training would improve the quality of assessments and referrals, save time for all the organizations involved and ensure lower rejection rates.

The “gap”

As well as the need for increased training to ensure more targeted referrals to micro-finance, UNDP has also identified a “gap” in the current system under the Action Plan. Some families do not qualify for micro-finance because of their low socio-economic status, but are not considered vulnerable enough to qualify for assistance under UNHCR’s EVI programme. There is a clear need for alternative programmes to meet the needs of these families. This need is particularly apparent in Trincomalee, for example.

UNDP is currently exploring ways in which it can address the needs of these families through a community-based approach to income generation. This is more feasible in the East where there are large numbers of released or returned children who are clustered in villages. As a result, UNDP has announced that it will set up five QUIPs (Quick Impact Projects) pilot schemes in Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee Districts.

The QUIPs pilot project will entail small-scale community based infrastructure projects that can be implemented quickly and provide sustainable support to communities. Communities will be involved in identifying infrastructure needs, such as community centres, water and sanitation facilities, refuse disposal sites and irrigation schemes. The schemes will be labour-intensive and provide short-term employment and skills development opportunities to approximately 25 – 30 people in the community, while indirectly benefiting the whole community through the infra-structure constructed or repaired.

UNDP is also exploring referring families under the Action Plan to existing UNDP programmes in the North East and possibly including additional partner agencies who can meet the need of families falling within the “gap”.

Partner organizations

By the end of the reporting period, UNDP had identified partner agencies running micro-finance schemes in all eight districts. UNDP has noted significant variances in the implementation of the programme in different districts. In some districts, such as Vavuniya and Mannar, there was already a strong pre-existing network of partner organizations. In these districts, the partner organizations take joint responsibility for conducting assessments and UNDP is less intensively involved in coordination efforts. In other districts, such as Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee, UNDP has had to identify new partner organizations to meet the need of families under the Action Plan, and is intensively engaged in coordination and training. In Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, UNDP works with a strong partner organization that has wide coverage.

The return of over 1,800 children in Batticaloa and Ampara in April 2004 prompted UNDP to expand its pool of partner organizations. UNDP is playing a central role in processing the referrals to all partner organizations, even when they are not funded by UNDP; overseeing the implementation of the projects and providing technical coordination. This model has proven highly successful and UNDP is considering replicating it in all eight districts of the North East.

In some districts, SCiSL and TRO social workers are also referring children and their families directly to organizations with their own funding for micro-finance schemes, such as CARE and Oxfam in the East.

UNDP and its partner organizations have endeavoured to fit families under the Action Plan into ongoing programmes at the community level. However, in some areas there is no micro-finance programme near to a child’s home, this is particularly the case in Trincomalee, for example.

A list of UNDP’s partner organizations is given below

Jaffna

Partners	Divisions covered
11 MPCS’s – Rural bank	Manipay , Nellyady, Kaithady, Thelipalai, Chavakachchary, Changanai, Maruthankerny, Udupitty, Atchuvaelly, Point Pedro, Jaffna.

Trincomalee

Partners	Divisions covered
Nilaveli Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society	Kuchaveli DS Division
Eachchilampattai United Development Association (EUDA)	10 villages in Eachchilampattai DS Division
Social Development Foundation (SDF)	Selected locations in Pulmodai, Kuchaveli DS Division
Trincomalee Integrated Model Farms Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society	Selected locations in all 11 DS Divisions of Trincomalee District

Iqbal Nagar Nazeera Women's Thrift and Cooperative Society	Iqbal Nagar village, Kuchaveli DS Division
Padavisriupura Ekabadda Women's Society	Selected locations in Padavisripura DS Division
Salli Malei Maghal Fisheries Cooperative Society	Salli, Town and Gravets
Eksath Sumedhagama Fisheries Cooperative Society	Sumedhagama, Town and Gravets
Manayaweli Sandy bay Fisheries Cooperative Society	Sandy bay, Town and Gravets
Arasady St. Joseph Fisheries Cooperative Society	Wellington avenue, Town and Gravets
Weeranagaraya Fisheries Cooperative Society	Weeranagar, Town and Gravets
Town and Gravets Women Development Cooperative Society	Town and Gravets
Perunteru Udayasooriyan Fisheries Cooperative Society	4 th Cross street, N.C. Road, Trincomalee
Muthur Central St. Anthony's Fisheries Cooperative Society	St. Anthony's, Muthur
Thakkuwanagar Bakriya Fisheries Cooperative Society	Thakkuwanagar, Muthur
Neithalnagar Fisheries Cooperative Societies	Neithalnagar, Muthur
Thakkuwanagar Wattam Fisheries Cooperative Society	Thakkuwanagar (Wattam), Muthur
Muthur East Mohamadhiya Fisheries Cooperative Society	Muthur East
Vigneshwara Fisheries Cooperative Society	Vigneshwara, Kuchaveli
Kallarawa St. Anthony's Fisheries Cooperative Society	Kallarawa, Kuchaveli
Naduthive Fisheries Cooperative Society	Naduthive, Kinniya

Kilinochchi/Mullaitivu

Partners	Divisions covered ¹²
Centre for Women Development and Rehabilitation in Kilinochchi	4 Divisions in Kilinochchi
Centre for Women Development and Rehabilitation in Mullaitivu	3 Divisions in Mullaitivu

¹² * still to be specified

Batticaloa / Ampara

Partners	Divisions covered
Batticaloa District	
ESCO	Koralaipattu South
CARE	Manmunai South West
SARVODAYA	Manmunai West
EHED	Manmunai South & Eruvil West
Oxfam Australia	Eravurpattu & Koralaipattu North
World Vision	Porathivupattu
Ampara District	
Mahashakthi	Alayadivembu DS
SWOAD	Other DS divisions

Vavuniya / Mannar

Partners	Divisions covered ¹³
SANASA	
SEEDS	

Training

UNDP has been engaged in an ongoing programme of training for partner organizations as well as beneficiaries. UNDP plays a coordinating and implementing role in regards to training. In Jaffna, for example, UNDP found that families needed specialized support to handle their newly acquired loans and helped to set up motivational trainings for families in April 2004. In Trincomalee, UNDP provided an orientation on micro-finance for TRO and SCiSL social workers in June 2004. In Vavuniya and Mannar, UNDP's long-established partners are responsible for conducting their own training programmes. UNDP has a series of trainings for implementing partners on micro-finance, entrepreneurship, leadership and social mobilization, reporting and monitoring planned for the coming six months.

Constraints

- The rapid and unexpected return of over 1,800 children in the East has put considerable strain on UNDP's capacity and resources. UNDP has had to rapidly expand its pool of partner organizations to meet the need in the East
- In some districts UNDP has encountered problems where there are no micro-finance activities in the areas of return
- There have been delays in providing families with loans in some districts in the North (Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu)
- The emergency and individualized nature of referrals under the Action Plan is not well suited to UNDP's model of sustainable micro-finance and income generation.
- There is a need for more training for SCiSL and TRO social workers in micro-finance and income generation to ensure more accurate and targeted referrals
- There is a "gap" in this component of the Action Plan. Some families are too vulnerable to qualify for a loan, but not vulnerable enough to qualify for UNHCR EVI assistance

¹³ * still to be specified

Future Plans

- UNDP is currently analyzing the reasons why families are unable to take up loans in order to tailor its programmes appropriately
- Where referrals are clustered, UNDP can set up projects for a group of children and their families in one particular area. This is the preferred option
- Where referrals are scattered across a wide area, UNDP will try to fit children's families into pre-existing micro-finance schemes
- UNDP is planning to establish community-based income generation programmes, such as QUIPs, and to extend its existing programmes to cover children and their families under the Action Plan
- UNDP is currently in the process of defining its coordinating role and setting clearer criteria for TRO referrals

6. ASSISTANCE FOR EXTREMELY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS

Overview

The Action Plan also makes provision for extremely vulnerable families. While not initially a formal partner of the Action Plan, UNHCR has been able to assist families of children released by the LTTE under a pre-existing programme for Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs) affected by the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. Assistance is considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the protection needs of each family. Assistance is generally in-kind and includes non-food relief items and housing materials. UNHCR may also consider assisting some families who do not qualify for micro-credit loans through the provision of materials and tools or by referring them to other organizations with income generation activities in the area. Exceptionally, cash assistance may be considered in cases of emergencies, such as covering transport costs to the hospital. In order to be assisted under UNHCR's EVI programme, families must meet UNHCR's vulnerability criteria.

Progress and Developments

Referrals to UNHCR – 30 June 2004

District	Kilino-chchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	TOTAL
No. referred	4	5	4	9	6	20	7	7	62
No. assisted	3 (NFRI)*	2 (shelter repair)	2 (NFRIs)	2 (NFRIs and shelter material to both families)	0	7 (NFRIs)	7 (NFRIs)	7 (4 shelter material and 3 NFRIs)	30

*NFRI refers to a package of non-food relief items provided by UNHCR

A total of 62 extremely vulnerable families were referred to UNHCR for assistance under the Action Plan. Thirty of these families were provided with assistance. The differences between the number of cases referred and the number assisted can be explained by a variety of factors:

1. UNHCR's review of the assessment is still pending
2. Assistance has been approved but distribution is pending
3. Families do not meet UNHCR's vulnerability criteria and do not qualify for assistance
4. UNHCR has been unable to find the family on the day of distribution

Constraints

- Due to the high number of returned child soldiers in the East, the UNHCR offices in Trincomalee and Batticaloa have faced a dramatic increase in the number of referrals. At the same time, UNHCR cannot redirect its resources to work solely on Action Plan cases, especially given the subsidiary and complimentary nature of its participation in the Action Plan
- UNHCR has worked together with UNICEF and SCiSL to clarify UNHCR's vulnerability criteria. As a result, new referrals appear to be more accurate in terms of identifying extremely vulnerable individuals
- Due to staffing constraints, UNHCR is unable to give individualized attention to each case. UNHCR is able to deliver non-food relief items, but does not have the staff or time to carry out more in-depth family assessments or provide more sustainable support. This has been a particular problem in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara
- There are concerns that assisting individual families of former child soldiers may cause resentment within communities, especially where there are other equally vulnerable families who do not have a child released by the LTTE
- UNHCR has a limited role and capacity within the Action Plan and is unable to fill the "gap" identified by UNDP and others

Future Plans

- In the North, UNHCR will continue to assist families referred under the Action Plan who meet UNHCR's vulnerability criteria. Assistance will be appropriate to the needs of the family.
- UNHCR will adopt a new approach in Trincomalee and Batticaloa on a pilot basis. This includes:
 - i) UNHCR will take up the referrals made by SCiSL without its own independent assessment of the cases. In the event that families do not meet UNHCR's vulnerability criteria, UNHCR will inform SCiSL and UNICEF in the hope that assessments can be improved in the future
 - ii) Given the constraints faced by UNHCR in Batticaloa and Trincomalee, assistance will be limited to non-food relief items at the current stage. Additional assistance may be provided in very specific cases at a later stage subject to UNHCR assessments

7. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Overview

A key component identified by the architects of the Action Plan was the need for intensive vocational and skills training for children and young people in the North East of Sri Lanka. As a result of the ongoing conflict, there is an acute shortage of skilled labour in this region. Many children have missed out on too

many years of schooling to be easily re-integrated back into formal education. Some young people feel that they are too old to return to school and have fallen too far behind in their formal studies. In other cases, the child and their family opt for vocational training rather than formal education as they feel that this will bring greater income into the family and stand the child in good stead for future employment.

ILO is responsible for this component of the Action Plan. Although ILO had already developed some vocational training programmes and a network of partner organizations, the number and geographical spread of children under the Action Plan have prompted it to vastly increase the scale and scope of its programme in the North East. ILO has also had to increase the speed and flexibility of its response in order to meet the emergency needs of children under the Action Plan.

Progress and Developments

ILO has established a network of vocational training partner agencies. Children are referred to the ILO by either SCiSL or TRO social workers after an initial assessment of the vocational training needs of the child. Depending on the quality of the assessment and the capacity of its partner organizations, ILO staff will then carry out their own assessment of each child's needs or pass the child directly to an implementing partner. ILO and the implementing partner will endeavour to find a vocational training course that is best suited to the needs of the child.

Most vocational training placements are for nine months. The training lasts up to seven months, with a period of two months at the end for placement in employment. One of the principal objectives of the training is to ensure employment for the young person at the end of the training.

Placements

By the end of the reporting period, ILO reported that it had placed 75 former child soldiers (referred by SCiSL) and 159 other vulnerable children (referred by TRO) in vocational training courses.

Children attending Vocational Training Courses, June 2004

District	Kilino-chchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	TOTAL
Former Child soldiers	6	2	19	14	9	11	3	11	75
Other Children	59	22	-	1	-	77	-		159
TOTAL	65	24	19	15	9	88	3	11	234

Information from ILO, June 30, 2004

Partner organizations

ILO is working with a range of partner organizations throughout the North East. To respond to the needs of children under the Action Plan, in particular following the return of some 1,800 children in the East, ILO has expanded its network of

partner agencies. In some cases, the vocational training is run by the partner organizations themselves, in other cases the partner organization will place children in a vocational training centre. ILO provides funding to its partner organizations to cover the cost of the training and necessary equipment, accommodation and transport and any other related costs.

ILO is the coordinating agency for the vocational training component of the Action Plan. As part of this role, ILO has started to convene sectoral coordination meetings with its partner organizations and other vocational training providers at the district and Colombo level. In addition, ILO meets regularly with SCiSL and TRO social workers in the field to discuss referrals and placements.

In some cases, SCiSL and TRO place children directly with other organizations that fund vocational training courses, such as the World University Service Canada (WUSC) in the East. WUSC has expressed a willingness to integrate children under the Action Plan into its ongoing vocational training programmes where appropriate.

List of ILO partner organizations

Name of the organization	District
Killinochchi Institute of Technology	5 districts of North
Rural Economic Education, Research and Development Organization (REERDO)	5 districts of North
Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya	Batticaloa
Eastern Self-Reliant Community Awakening Organization (ESCO)	Batticaloa
Social Welfare Organization Ampara District (SWOAD)	Ampara
Community and Technical Education Centre	Vavuniya
Valvuthayam	Mannar
Patrician Institute	Jaffna
Institute of Nursery Studies and Gender Development	Jaffna
St. Johns Vocational Training Centre	Batticaloa
Department of Industries	Trincomalee
Grace Care Centre	Trincomalee
Centre for Women's Development and Rehabilitation	Killinochchi /Mullaitivu

ILO staff

ILO employs a full time project coordinator, a vocational training specialist, a programme assistant, a part-time accountant, an administrative assistant, and an associate expert in Colombo to coordinate the Action Plan project. In the field, ILO employs two full time field officers (one in Kilinochchi and one in Batticaloa) and two part time associate field officers (one in Trincomalee and one in Batticaloa).

Training

ILO has participated in training for SCiSL, TRO and MoSW social workers coordinated by UNICEF and the National Institute of Social Development (NISD). During these training sessions, ILO has provided expert input on the vocational training component of the Action Plan. In addition, ILO has provided orientation for SCiSL social workers on vocational training assessments and referrals.

Constraints and Future Plans

ILO has been constrained by its lack of resource, staffing and infrastructure capacity which have caused delays in the implementation of this project. This is particularly the case in the East where ILO has faced considerable challenges given the large numbers of children and its limited capacity. These constraints include:

- Lack of field presence – only two full-time field officers covering the whole of the North East
- Lack of transport – only one security compliant vehicle with which to implement the project
- Lack of infrastructure - at the beginning of the project ILO did not have fully functional offices in the North East
- Delays in identifying and funding partner organizations
- Insufficient funds - to date, ILO has been unable to raise sufficient funds to fully implement its component of the Action Plan

With the addition of two part time associate field officers, the establishment of functioning offices in Batticaloa and Kilinochchi and the identification and funding of new partner organizations, ILO has been able to increase its capacity and speed up its response. ILO is also hoping to acquire a new vehicle to help with the functioning of its programmes in the East. The lack of sufficient funding to implement this component of the Action Plan remains a serious problem.

ILO's stringent criteria for vocational training, while to be applauded for protecting children, have also impeded the speed and flexibility of implementation. In particular:

- ILO has strict rules about not placing trainees in any kind of hazardous labour (as defined by the ILO). This restricts its choice of apprenticeships and partner organizations
- ILO has strict rules about the age limit for vocational training (14 – 18 year olds)
- Some children and young people have been excluded from vocational training as a result of these restrictions
- There is a need for additional training for SCiSL and TRO social workers to ensure more accurate and targeted referrals to vocational training

While remaining within its mandate and ensuring that children are not engaged in hazardous labour, ILO has attempted to adopt as flexible approach as possible. Children have been given emergency placements in vocational training courses and it has increased the age limit for girls 20 years of age.

Finally, the emergency and individualized nature of the Action Plan is not well suited to ILO's programming and systemic approach to vocational training for the following reasons:

- Most vocational training courses have fixed start and finishing dates, and due to the need to place trainees in employment by the end of their course it is difficult to slot in children half way through a training course. This approach does not lend itself to emergency placements of children in vocational training
- Children are often scattered across wide distances. It is extremely difficult to start up new vocational training courses for a very small number of children. ILO needs to cluster a sufficiently large group of children in one place in order to justify setting up a new course
- It takes time to properly assess children to identify the appropriate skills training course

In order to respond to this difficulty, ILO has proposed setting up mobile community-based training. This roving training programme will provide training to 10 – 20 children (aged 14 – 18) in one location. The training will last anywhere from two weeks to two months in each location. ILO is working with the Provincial Department of Trade to design the programmes and train the trainers. Five pilot projects are due to start in September in four locations in Batticaloa and one location in Trincomalee. It is hoped that these projects can provide training to up to 600 children.

8. EDUCATION

Overview

The overall objective of the education component of the Action Plan is to support efforts to improve the quality of education and ensure that all children are back in school in the North East. At the time the Action Plan was initiated, an estimated 50,000 children were not attending school in the North East as a result of the war¹⁴. Children have dropped out of school, or attend irregularly, for a variety of reasons related to the conflict in the North East, including: displacement, destruction of school buildings, shortages of teachers, poor quality of schooling, poverty, lack of school infrastructure, unfriendly school environments and child recruitment.

UNICEF, which has overall responsibility for this sector of the Action Plan, has engaged in a major back-to-school campaign throughout the eight districts of the North East to encourage children to enroll back in school.

¹⁴ See *Sri Lanka: Assessment of the Needs in the Conflict Affected Areas*, May 2003 (prepared with the support of Asian Development Bank, United Nations, World Bank)

At the end of the reporting period a total of 6,751 children had enrolled back in school.

At the same time, through the Zonal Departments of Education (ZDE), UNICEF and GTZ are supporting emergency Catch-Up-Education (CUE) classes for children who have missed several years of schooling and need accelerated learning opportunities to catch up with their peers. UNICEF and the National Institute of Education (NIE), alongside the Provincial and Zonal education authorities and Tamil Eelam Education Society are developing standardized materials for catch-up-education in all districts. In addition, they are developing an intensive teacher training programme to ensure sufficient numbers of qualified teachers to implement the programme. At the end of the reporting period, 43,881 children were enrolled in CUE classes throughout the North East.

CUE differs from district to district depending on the need and numbers of children. In some districts, children attend normal classes during the day and then remain after school for CUE classes in particular subjects. In other districts, where there are larger numbers of children, the classes are held during school hours and the children fit back into normal classes once they reach the required level. In exceptional circumstances where there is no school-based CUE, UNICEF has supported classes at the village level for all vulnerable children who require support. However, the preference is always to support CUE classes within the school system.

UNICEF is also assisting with the repair and reconstruction of the estimated 500 school buildings in the North East that were damaged or completely destroyed during the war, and the construction of temporary school shelters where necessary¹⁵. In addition, UNICEF provides school stationery kits and material for school uniforms to particularly vulnerable children throughout the North East.

At the end of the reporting period, UNICEF had distributed 11,599 school kits and assisted with the repair and reconstruction of 241 school buildings.

The World Food Programme is running a school feeding programme in several districts of the North East. Many children leave home without a proper meal and providing a school meal helps with their concentration and general nutrition and health. School meals are also provided to children who stay behind after school for CUE classes. At the end of the reporting period, 21,548 children were receiving WFP school meals.

UNICEF is currently discussing a proposal with the National Youth Services Council (NYSC) to establish a package of vocational training, adolescence life skills, literacy and recreational activities in the North East. In the interim, UNICEF has agreed to fund a proposal from the Provincial Youth Services Council in Batticaloa for capacity building and life skills and vocational education development for 40 youth clubs in 14 GS divisions in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Progress and Developments

Back-to-school enrollment drive

District	Kilino-chchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	Total
Primary	15	52	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	25	
Secondary	30	84	-	30	-	N/A	N/A	60	
Former Child soldiers	11	9	-	25	-	587	N/A	125	
TOTAL	56	145	-	55	-	2,962	3,323	210	6,751

CUE

District	Kilino-chchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	Total
Primary	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-	4,480	1,950	1,620	
Secondary	12,702	8,846	10,500	1,152	-	719	1,442	375	
No. former child soldiers	19	9	N/A	N/A	-	587	31	95	
TOTAL	12,702	8,846	10,500	1,152	-	5,199	3,392	2,090	43,881
No. primary schools	N/A	N/A		N/A	-	116	84	54	
No. secondary schools	68	54	250	38	-	22	88	20	
No. primary teachers	N/A	N/A		N/A	-	97	156	54	
No. secondary Teachers	1,725	1,702	500	192	-	N/A	N/A	80	

(- indicates that no programmes were run during the reporting period; N/A indicates that data is not available or not applicable)

School kits

District	Kilino-chchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	TOTAL
Primary	615	2,099	-	-	-	452	2,156	-	
Secondary	589	2,276	-	1,237	-	1,000	700	475	
Total	1,204	4,375	-	1,237	-	1,452	2,856	475	11,599

School uniforms

District	Kilinochchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	
Primary	44m		-	-	N/A	-	15,762m	13,843m	-
Secondary	81m		-	-	410 uniforms	-	N/A	N/A	-
Total	125m		-	-	410 uniforms	-	15,762m	13,843m	90 uniforms

WFP feeding programme

District	Kilinochchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	Total
Primary	N/A	N/A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Secondary	12,702	8,846	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	12,702	8,846	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,548

School buildings: Repair and temporary shelter

District	Kilinochchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	TOTAL
Repair	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	-	-
Temporary shelter	-	-	N/A	-	-	14	78	5	-
Semiperm/permanent	3	-	N/A	8	10	-	95	3	-
TOTAL	3	-	25	8	10	-	187	8	241

(- indicates that no programmes were run during the reporting period; N/A indicates that data is not available or not applicable)

Some highlights from the districts:

Kilinochchi/ Mullaitivu

Back-to-School Drive: This is implemented by a local NGO, REERDO, the ZDE and the Tamil Eelam Education Society. 201 children in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu have returned to school since the start of the programme. Twenty children released from the transit centre were also admitted to school.

Catch up Education:

12,702 children are attending CUE in 122 schools in both districts in Tamil, Maths, Science, English and Social studies. The programme started at the end of May 2004. Twenty children released from the transit centre are also receiving CUE classes.

WFP School Feeding Programme:

WFP is providing school meals for all the children attending CUE classes in both districts.

School Kits: UNICEF distributed stationary kits to 5,579 vulnerable students in both districts with the assistance of school principals, Grama Sevaka Officers and the Zonal Department of Education. UNICEF is targeting children who attend school irregularly as they are the most likely to drop-out of classes, as well as children who have already dropped out. The distribution of stationary kits is accompanied by an awareness programme for the parents.

Batticaloa/ Ampara

Back-to-School Drive: A total of 6,285 children have enrolled in the back-to-school drive in Batticaloa and Ampara (2,962 in Batticaloa and 3,323 in Ampara)

Catch up Education:

- 5,199 children have enrolled in CUE classes in Batticaloa
- 3,392 children have enrolled for CUE classes in Ampara
- 138 primary and secondary schools are running CUE classes in Batticaloa
- 172 primary and secondary schools are running CUE classes in Ampara

Teacher training:

Teacher trainings for English teachers, CUE instructors on the CUE curriculum, and school principals, teachers and education officials on Child Friendly Schools have been conducted throughout both districts.

Raising Awareness:

UNICEF and the ZDE have conducted awareness raising programmes for parents and education officials on the importance of education, as well as sensitization discussions for school principals and senior education officials on reintegration of the different categories of school dropouts who are returning to school.

School supplies:

- 1,700 school kits for upper primary and 2,608 school kits for lower primary have been distributed in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts.
- 29,605 metres of material have been distributed for school uniforms.
- 468 mats have been distributed to CUE centres.
- 3 vehicles have been provided to the Kalkudah, Akkaraipattu and Mahoya Zonal Departments of Education

School buildings:

- 95 semi permanent buildings and 92 temporary sheds have been constructed in Batticaloa and Ampara.

Jaffna

Catch up Education:

- Some 4,500 children in grade 7 are attending CUE classes in Tamil and Mathematics in 150 schools in all five education zones.
- 6,000 students in Grade 8 are receiving CUE classes in Tamil and Mathematics subjects in 200 schools.

Teacher training:

Teacher training for CUE is ongoing. 300 teachers have received training in both Tamil and mathematics (two from each school) for CUE.

Vavuniya

Catch Up Education:

At the end of June, 827 children were attending CUE classes in Vavuniya South education zone. 325 children were attending CUE classes in Vavuniya North education zone. An additional 1,120 children were due to join classes in Vavuniya north education zone at the time of reporting.

School Supplies:

827 school kits were distributed to children in Vavuniya South education zone. School kits and uniforms were provided to 410 vulnerable children in Vavuniya, including refugee returnees from India, political prisoners' children and children from the IDP camps.

School Buildings:

Eight semi-permanent school structures were built in Vavuniya North education zone.

Mannar

Catch up Education:

Mannar and Madu education zones have identified 2,500 children for CUE classes.

School buildings:

Infrastructure assistance has been provided to ten schools.

Trincomalee

Catch up Education:

CUE classes in Trincomalee are called Happy Learning Centres. These are implemented by a local NGO, the Educational Development Organization (EDO), which is composed of school teachers and principals and aims to improve education standards for all children. Due to the need for emergency CUE classes for children released by the LTTE and school drop-outs, EDO have been running CUE classes for some 470 secondary school students since May 2004. Five centres are within Trincomalee Zonal Education Office and 15 are within Muthur ZEO.

Teacher training:

48 teachers in Muthur education zone completed multi-grade teacher training; while 58 school principals completed a ten day training on school-based management.

School supplies:

All released children have received school kits and material for uniforms. All children who join the CUE classes (Happy Learning centres) receive school kits.

School buildings:

Five temporary shelters and three semi-permanent buildings were completed during the reporting period.

Constraints and Future Plans

- Delays in the completion of proposals (by the ZDE) and release of funding and supplies (by UNICEF) for CUE classes have slowed progress in this sector
- Lack of school buildings, infrastructure and facilities has meant that in some areas children enrolled in the back-to-school drive have been unable to return to school due to the lack of class room space, tables and chairs. This has also discouraged some children from enrolling in the back-to-school drive
- Teacher shortages – the lack of trained teachers throughout the North East remains a challenge
- ZDE - there have been some communication difficulties with ZDE authorities and a lack of capacity in some ZDE's to implement, report, and monitor UNICEF funded programmes
- Lack of secondary school facilities in remote areas – no classes beyond grade V. This is discouraging some secondary school students from enrolling in the back-to-school campaign

- Need for sensitization and awareness raising amongst school principals and teachers to integrate former child soldiers children back into school. This also requires a more flexible approach by school principals (e.g. allowing children to return to school without necessary documentation, shoes or uniform)
- Protection and security problems – the LTTE is targeting schools in the East as part of its recruitment drive. Many children are recruited on their way to and from school or outside the school buildings. Parents are reluctant to send their children to school for fear of recruitment

9. HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Overview

As part of its ongoing activities to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of health services in the North East, UNICEF is responsible for the health and nutrition sector of the Action Plan. UNICEF's activities under this component centre around five main activities:

- construction and renovation of health facilities
- provision of medical equipment
- training of health personnel
- transport for health services
- water and sanitation

In all eight districts of the North East, health services have been seriously disrupted by the conflict. In many areas health facilities have been completely or partially destroyed by the fighting. According to an inter-agency assessment of conflict affected areas in the North East in May 2003, an estimated 55 health facilities were completely destroyed and 49 were not functioning.¹⁶ The health facilities that remain are in a serious state of disrepair, severely under-staffed and lack the necessary equipment. There is a chronic shortage of health staff as many health professionals are unwilling to live and work in the North East. This is primarily due to insecurity, inaccessibility of health facilities and lack of public transport, lack of residential facilities and poor living conditions and the dilapidated state of many of the health facilities. There is also a dearth of equipment in the health facilities which is another factor that discourages health professionals from working in the North East.

UNICEF has endeavoured to address some of these problems through a comprehensive package of assistance to the North East.

Progress and Developments

Construction/repair of health facilities

In all eight districts, UNICEF has supported the construction and repair of Gramodaya Health Centres (GHC's). The GHC's provide basic preventive health services such as ante natal care, growth monitoring of children, immunization services, as well as general health promotion activities. During the reporting

¹⁶ See *Sri Lanka: Assessment of the Needs in the Conflict Affected Areas*, May 2003 (prepared with the support of Asian Development Bank, United Nations, World Bank)

period UNICEF helped to repair and/ or construct 42 GHC's. This will help to bring health care closer to communities and result in better clinic care for pregnant women and children.

In addition, UNICEF has supported the construction of an intensive care unit and dental unit at **Kilinochchi** District hospital. UNICEF is also supporting the renovation and repair of one rural hospital in **Mullaitivu** by extending the labour ward, renovation of the operating theatre and provision of a blood bank. UNICEF has supported the extension of the premature baby unit at the teaching hospital in **Jaffna** and helped to construct a premature baby unit at the base hospital in Point Pedro, in Jaffna District. UNICEF also helped to rehabilitate the labour room of Kodikamam central dispensary and maternity home located 30km south of Jaffna town. In **Mannar**, UNICEF has helped with the construction of a maternity ward complex at the base hospital and with a mother and child health complex in Murunkan. UNICEF has also supported the extension of the labour room and post-natal ward and constructed a new premature baby unit at the **Vavuniya** general hospital.

Similarly, in **Trincomalee**, UNICEF has helped support the construction and refurbishment of a post-natal ward and a paediatric ward in Trincomalee general hospital and the expansion and refurbishment of labour rooms in Trincomalee general hospital and Kinniya and Muthur District hospitals. UNICEF funded the reconstruction of a labour room and operating theatre in Dehitikandya Base Hospital in **Ampara** District. UNICEF has supported the extension of the premature baby unit at the teaching hospital in **Jaffna** and helped to construct a premature baby unit at the base hospital in Point Pedro, in Jaffna District.

Construction/ repair of GHC's

District	Kilinochchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Trincomalee	Batticaloa	Ampara	Total
Completed	3	6	2	-	2	4	-	1	
Ongoing	7	4	5	6	-	2	-	-	
Total	10	10	7	6	2	6	-	1	42

(- indicates that programmes did not occur during the reporting period)

Distribution of medical equipment

UNICEF has also supported health care facilities throughout the North East with the distribution of medical equipment. New equipment will help to improve the quality of medical care in the North East. In **Kilinochchi**, UNICEF provided equipment for the new intensive care and dental units at the District Hospital. UNICEF has provided furniture for GHC's and rural hospitals in **Mullaitivu** District. In **Jaffna**, UNICEF helped to equip 15 peripheral health institutions with emergency obstetrics care equipment. In **Trincomalee**, UNICEF has provided a variety of medical equipment to 15 different health facilities. UNICEF provided emergency obstetric equipment to eight health facilities (rural and base hospital and central dispensary/ maternity hospitals) in **Ampara** District. Emergency obstetric equipment has been ordered for the **Batticaloa** Hospitals.

Training of health personnel

One of the most serious problems faced by the health sector in the North East is the chronic shortage of medical staff. In several districts, health care facilities are staffed almost entirely by volunteers.

To address this problem, UNICEF is supporting intensive training for health care personnel across the North East.

In **Mullaitivu**, UNICEF is supporting the training of 60 health personnel (seven public health midwives, 15 rural health assistants, and 48 health volunteers) in maternal and child care. In **Jaffna**, 45 rural health assistants have been trained and provided with incentives to assist midwives in rural areas. The Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services (DPDHS) has trained 106 teachers from two zones in life skills based education, including awareness raising on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS awareness. UNICEF has supported the training of 81 public health midwives and 25 public health inspectors by the provincial department of health services office in **Trincomalee** District. The public health midwives received training on nutrition and maternal and child health care; while the public health inspectors received training on water and sanitation, garbage disposal, and health education. UNICEF helped fund an HIV/AIDS awareness programme for 5,000 children in **Ampara** DPDHS school zone. The Family Health Bureau held a training of trainers in July for the Ministry of Health on integrated early childhood development.

Transport for health personnel

An ongoing problem facing health facilities in the North East is the inaccessibility of health posts and the lack of public transport. This is both a deterrent for medical staff and also impacts the quality of medical services. Medical personnel do not have adequate transport to travel to and from health facilities or to conduct community out-reach work. At the same time, there are a lack of ambulances and hospital vehicles to transport patients to and from health facilities. Finally, the lack of transport and inaccessibility of facilities has detrimentally impacted the construction and repair of health buildings.

To remedy this problem, UNICEF has been helping to provide cars, motorbikes and push bikes to the health services. In **Mullaitivu**, UNICEF provided 40 bicycles for 20 primary health centres. In **Jaffna**, UNICEF provided a double cab to the medical officer of maternal and child health, 46 motorbikes for public health inspectors and 70 bicycles for midwives. UNICEF provided one ambulance each to **Vavuniya** and **Mannar** general hospitals. UNICEF also provided two double cabs to the medical officers of health in Vavuniya North and in Adampan, Mannar District to provide basic preventive health services in these very difficult areas. In **Trincomalee**, 18 motorbikes have been distributed to public health inspectors. UNICEF provided an ambulance to Dehitikandya Base Hospital in **Ampara** District and an ambulance for the Navakadu Central Dispensary in **Batticaloa**.

Water and sanitation

A key challenge throughout the North East has been to construct and repair water and sanitation facilities. UNICEF has taken responsibility for water and sanitation provision in schools and health centres, including the construction and repair of water tanks, latrines, pipes, tube wells and improvement of drainage. As well as ensuring safe water and improving sanitation facilities, this also addresses problems of poor drainage, polluted ground water sources and water borne diseases. UNICEF has supported surveys of water and sanitation facilities in schools and primary health centres throughout the North East to assess

access to water and sanitation and water quality and to identify the need for repair and construction.

The strategy is to progressively cover all primary health care centres and type II and III schools with adequate safe drinking water facilities and appropriate sanitary facilities in the North East.

UNICEF has assisted in the construction and repair of water facilities in 86 health centres and 212 schools during the reporting period.

Water and sanitation facilities in health centres

District	Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa and Ampara	Trincomalee	TOTAL
Completed	N/A	12	N/A	-	8	12	
Ongoing	6	8	5	-	N/A	35	
Total	6	20	5	-	8	47	86

(- indicates that programmes did not occur during the reporting period; N/A indicates that data is not available or non-applicable)

Water and sanitation facilities in schools

District	Kilinochchi	Mullaitivu	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Mannar	Batticaloa and Ampara	Trincomalee	TOTAL
Completed	32	16	73	-	-	N/A	45	
Ongoing	N/A	-	2	-	-	24	20	
Total	32	16	75	-	-	24	65	212

(- indicates that programmes did not occur during the reporting period; N/A indicates that data is not available or non-applicable)

In **Jaffna**, UNICEF has completed the construction and rehabilitation of water and sanitation in 12 health facilities, while work is ongoing in a further eight GHC's. This project, which is implemented by the DPDHS, will benefit as many as 50,000 children and more than 100,000 adults. UNICEF has also helped to repair water facilities in 75 type III schools which will benefit some 12,500 children.

UNICEF provided a water bowser to the government agent office in **Kilinochchi** in March 2004. Thirty two schools in Kilinochchi have been provided with wells and latrines under the supervision of Zonal Director of Education in each zone. Facilities for water and sanitation are under construction at six GHC's.

UNICEF provided water tanks, pump houses and wells for five health facilities in **Vavuniya** during the reporting period. All work was carried out by the DPDHS. In **Trincomalee**, UNICEF supported a sample survey of water and sanitation facilities in primary health care institutions, rural hospitals and type III schools in the D.S. Divisions of Muthur, Kuchaveli and Gomarankadawala. In addition, UNICEF funded improvements to water supply and drainage facilities in 12 rural hospitals, including Muthur and Kinniya District Hospitals and the Kanthalai Base hospital, as well as ongoing work in 24 Gramodaya Health Centres and 11 Public Health Centres. UNICEF has also provided water tanks and water pumps to 65 schools in Muthur (in 45 schools the work is completed).

Following the clashes between the two LTTE factions in the border area between **Trincomalee and Batticaloa**, about 167 families from Kathiraveli in the Northern part of Batticaloa and Verugal Mughattuwaran (Trincomalee District) were displaced to the Echilampattai school. UNICEF provided two 1,000 litre water tanks for the displaced families and helped to set up a simple drinking water distribution system. UNICEF **Batticaloa** also provided buckets, mats, soap and vehicles for mobile health services to support over 3,000 persons displaced in Vakhari.

Work is about to start to repair the water lines and construct a well and water tank for **Batticaloa** teaching hospital. At the same time, the DPDHS in Kalmunai division of **Ampara** District has completed the repair and construction of water and sanitation facilities in eight health facilities. Toilets have been constructed for 14 primary schools in the Kalmunai, Akkaraipattu and Sammanthurai Education Zones and 10 schools in the Mahaoya and Dehiattakandiya education zones have benefited from water and sanitation facilities.

10. SOCIAL WORK

Overview

The social work sub-project of the Action Plan is designed to link the most vulnerable children to appropriate services. The social workers make assessments of children’s needs, refer children and their families to appropriate services and provide follow-up to ensure that the services are actually delivered. Assessment is an ongoing process and often recommendations require amending to remain appropriate.

Three key agencies are involved in the provision of social work under the Action Plan. UNICEF provides overall coordination for this component:

Agency	Responsibility
Department of Probation and Child Care, Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW)	Statutory cases, general protection and vulnerability
Save the Children in Sri Lanka (SCiSL)	Released child soldiers
Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO)	Child labour, street children, transit centre released child soldiers
UNICEF	Coordination with agencies

Progress and Developments

Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO)

TRO is responsible for social work with vulnerable children in the North East who are not former child soldiers. TRO social workers identify vulnerable children through community leaders and networks, visit children and their families, conduct assessments of the family’s needs and make referrals to appropriate services under the Action Plan.

UNICEF provides funding to TRO for this component of the Action Plan. The TRO social work project commenced in October 2003 but did not receive funding until April 2004 due to difficulties in reaching an agreement with UNICEF on the specific groups of children TRO would assist. UNICEF has now agreed to fund TRO for social work with street children and children engaged in hazardous forms of labour. To date, TRO has identified 859 cases of street children of whom 255 have been referred for services, and 1,256 cases of child labour of whom 425 have been referred for services. In addition, TRO has assessed 4,247 cases of very vulnerable children of whom 980 have been referred for services. However, these children fall outside of the remit of UNICEF's funding to TRO under the Action Plan. TRO made house to house assessments of families and identified 8,006 children in need of assistance. Of the identified cases, 1,890 have been referred for services.

TRO has developed a comprehensive database for case management which will not only help in tracking individual cases, but will also enable TRO to provide a statistical analysis of its caseload and the work achieved.

Those children who fall outside the specific criteria for UNICEF funding under the Action Plan (i.e. other vulnerable children who are not street children or involved in child labour), are assisted under TRO's broader social work programme which is funded separately.

In addition to the joint training coordinated by UNICEF, TRO has provided four training sessions to its own social workers.

Constraints

- Although TRO did not receive funding from UNICEF until April 2004, TRO continued with its social work activities.
- Supplies have not yet been delivered to TRO which is having a significant impact particularly in respect to data management and transport for social workers.
- Action Plan partner agencies have identified the need for clearer criteria for TRO referrals to avoid over-burdening already limited resources and capacity
- TRO capacity to manage funds and to carry out social work assessments needs to be strengthened through management and technical training.

Department of Probation and Child Care, MOSW

The Department of Probation and Child Care (DPCC) is responsible for statutory care cases under the Action Plan. This includes working with children at risk, including cases of child abuse, cases of juvenile justice and with children in alternative care institutions. The DPCC also works with particularly vulnerable children and their families, referring them to appropriate services where necessary.

Under the Action Plan, UNICEF has provided funding for extending the capacity of the DPCC. This includes, increasing DPCC staffing (POs and CRPOs), supplies and training.

Constraints: At the beginning of the project the DPCC was seriously understaffed. With the help of UNICEF funding, they have been able to recruit 19 new Probation and Child Care Services Officers.

Save the Children in Sri Lanka (SCiSL)

SCiSL has primary responsibility for social work with released child soldiers under the Action Plan. SCiSL social workers conduct family visits, provide child care assessments for each child, make referrals to appropriate services under the Action Plan and maintain contact with the child and their family through follow-up visits.

SCiSL commenced work in Kilinochchi in October 2003 when the first children were released to the transit centre. Of the 186 children who were released to the transit centre since October 2003, 180 have been reunified with families and provided with social work support. Of these, 88 children have returned to school, 45 are receiving vocational training; 16 have received psycho-social support and 30 families are receiving income generation support.

In February 2004, SCiSL began working with children who were directly released by the LTTE. At the end of the reporting period SCiSL had provided social work assessments to a total of 580 former child soldiers.

Children released to the transit centre are referred to SCiSL by the transit centre management staff. In the case of children released directly to their families, UNICEF makes a referral to SCiSL based either on information provided by the LTTE to UNICEF, or on its own information of children who have registered as released or returned home. All cases are verified by UNICEF prior to making referrals.

All children receive an initial assessment visit by SCiSL to identify the child's and family's needs. For more complex cases this requires multiple visits. SCiSL work closely with the family to determine their needs, make appropriate referrals to the relevant agencies, and provide follow-up to ensure that reintegration is successful and that families are assisted where problems arise. The social workers are careful not to create dependency as their involvement with families is finite.

SCiSL has worked with UNICEF, UNDP, ILO and UNHCR to develop a standard assessment and referral form for its social workers. It is hoped that this will provide a tool for more accurate and targeted referrals to each of the services under the Action Plan.

In May 2004, a joint team from MoSW, TRO and UNICEF carried out a review of the SCiSL social work component of the Action Plan. The team visited 33 families in five districts of the North. While the review concluded that SCiSL had carried out efficient assessments and the social work elements of the project had been effective, problems in the implementation of other projects under the Action Plan had resulted in serious delays in the provision of services to vulnerable families.

To respond to the return of over 1,800 former child soldiers to their homes in April 2004, SCiSL significantly increased its staffing in the East. In June 2004, SCiSL hired 40 additional social workers in Batticaloa and Ampara, increasing its staff to 45 social workers. During the initial registration of returned children in the East, UNICEF identified particularly vulnerable children and those with special protection problems. These cases were referred to SCiSL as the first priority for social work assessments and follow-up. Because the cases were spread out over large distances and often involved complex protection problems, they were extremely time consuming for the social workers and entailed a lot of traveling. This slowed down the assessments for the rest of the children in the early stages.

Currently SCiSL has one programme manager, five team leaders and 55 social workers working on the Action Plan. SCiSL has contributed its own funding to the social work sub-project of the Action Plan.

In addition to the joint training facilitated by UNICEF for SCiSL, TRO and MoSW social workers under the Action Plan, SCiSL provides training to all its own social workers on social work skills and understanding the needs of children reintegrating into communities. Specific attention is paid to the reintegration needs of children who were recruited by the LTTE.

Constraints: The unexpectedly high number of children who returned home during the reporting period tested SCiSL's capacity significantly. With only two social workers in the East at the time the children returned home, there was not sufficient capacity to meet the needs of all 1,800 children. The recruitment of new staff has helped to overcome this problem.

The lack of sufficient vehicles has also been a constraint, a situation that was exacerbated by a decision not to travel on motorbikes following a serious security incident in the East. However, new vehicles for SCiSL are expected imminently.

Finally, all the partner agencies in the Action Plan have identified the need for on-going training for SCiSL social workers to improve the quality and accuracy of referrals to reintegration activities.

Training

UNICEF has coordinated joint social work training for all agencies participating in the social work component of the Action Plan. Training has been provided with the assistance of the National Institute of Social Development (NISD).

The following training sessions were held during the reporting period:

23 – 25 January, 2004: Trincomalee, training by UNICEF for SCiSL Social Workers on communication, interviewing children and team building

13 February 2004: Kilinochchi, training by UNICEF and SCiSL for UNICEF, TRO, SCiSL social workers on transit centre procedures, child care assessments and home assessments

6 – 13 June, 2004: Vavuniya, basic social work training by UNICEF, ILO, TRO and NISD for PO's and CRPO's from the North

District social work meetings

The partner organizations agreed to hold social work meetings in each district to coordinate their respective activities under the social work component of the Action Plan. These meetings have been now held in Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Vavuniya and are due to take place in the other districts. Where the meetings have occurred they have been effective and beneficial, although in some instances not all organizations have attended which has limited the efficacy of the exercise.

11. PSYCHO-SOCIAL CARE

Overview

The objective of this component of the Action Plan is to support the recovery of war-affected children, especially where they have experienced psychological trauma as a result of the conflict. UNICEF supports this initiative of the Action Plan through a variety of interventions for war-affected children, children who are abused and marginalized in the community, single female heads of households and children who have been released by the LTTE. Part of UNICEF's involvement has been to build the capacity of psycho-social networks to provide appropriate support in areas where the community has suffered high levels of trauma. UNICEF implements psycho-social programmes in partnership with local government as well as local and international NGOs.

Progress and Developments

Counseling network for children and families

Under the Action Plan, provision is made to provide psycho-social counseling to children and families with psychological needs. This includes former child soldiers who may have been particularly traumatized by their experience, as well as other vulnerable children and families in the North East who have been affected by the conflict.

UNICEF has supported the establishment of a network of community-based counselors in each district in the North East. The counselors come from a cross section of organizations, both national and international. The network is linked to the psychiatric unit of the government hospitals wherever it is functioning. One local organization has been identified in each district to coordinate the network and receives financial assistance from UNICEF.

A set of criteria has been drawn up for the referral of children to psycho-social counseling. This helps social workers identify particular behavioural patterns in children that may require psychological assistance. Social workers refer children in need of psycho-social support to the coordinating agency, who will in turn appoint counselors for the children. The social workers and counselors work closely together to ensure that the child and their family receive the necessary support.

Of the 580 children assessed by SCiSL social workers during the reporting period, a total of 94 children were provided with psycho-social assistance. Of these, two children were referred for advanced counseling and clinical help. A total of 44 counselors in all eight districts are providing psycho-social support

under the Action Plan. One of the major constraints faced by counselors has been the problem of transport and accessibility. Many of the children live in remote and inaccessible areas where transport is difficult.

Counseling networks for other vulnerable children have been set up in five of the eight districts. To date, none of these children have been referred for psycho-social support.

Training for counselors

UNICEF has helped to run training and awareness raising for 20 counselors in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Jaffna, Vavuniya and Mannar Districts in the North. A similar training for counselors in the East will take place shortly. Training materials on psycho-social support have been developed for awareness training programmes for schools, work places, places of worship and community centres. The awareness raising materials will be field tested to ensure that they are culturally appropriate.

Children's club activities

In addition, UNICEF is supporting the establishment of children's clubs in all eight districts. UNICEF will help to run child-friendly leadership training for the animators of the children's clubs on child rights and children's psychological well-being. The children's clubs will provide an opportunity for children to come together to play, receive help in reading and school work and engage in other constructive activities. The children's clubs will also provide children with training on psychological self help and leadership training as well as awareness raising on child rights and how to overcome exploitation and abuse in their families and wider community.

Capacity building programmes

UNICEF has also helped to support an intensive training programme for psycho-social trainers. The training was provided by a local NGO in Jaffna and based on the work of a group of academics in the medical faculty at the University of Jaffna who are examining issues relating to the mental health and psychological problems faced by people living in the conflict zones in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Fifteen university graduates were selected to participate in the training which was conducted over a period of nine months.

Those trained under this scheme have since provided training to local and international NGOs and government bodies that work with women and children in the North East. It is hoped that the training will help to improve the capacity of these organizations.

In addition, an awareness raising programme on the needs of adolescents was conducted in 40 schools in Jaffna District for some 5,000 children and 1,000 teachers.

In Kilinochchi, an NGO implementing partner for psycho-social programmes is running a two stage training programme for participants in both Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. The training is for individuals who work with children on a daily basis, including the police, care givers in children's homes and homes for mentally disturbed women, health workers and local children's NGOs.

Working with female headed households

Programmes for female headed households and women affected by conflict have been set up in selected DS divisions in Trincomalee and Batticaloa. The programmes include individual counseling, income generation, formation of children's clubs, training and awareness programmes and entrepreneurship workshops. This programme is benefiting over 700 women and 1,000 children.

12. ALTERNATIVE CARE

Overview

The Action Plan seeks to raise the standard of care in children's homes in the North East both in terms of physical conditions and staffing capacity. This includes raising awareness about children's need and ensuring that children have regular access to families and are able to return home when circumstances allow. Many children's homes in the North East are also in need of major repairs and renovations in order to provide reasonable living conditions for children. UNICEF has provided funding for the repair and rehabilitation of children's homes and for supplies and materials; helped to facilitate training programmes for staff; and supported other capacity building initiatives in 31 children's homes in the North East.

In the event that children leaving the LTTE are unable to return to their homes or extended family, SCiSL social workers will try to find an alternative solution, including placing children in alternative care where necessary. SCiSL social workers identify the most appropriate children's home taking into account the location and preferences of the child and their family. UNICEF endeavours to provide support to these children's homes under this component of the Action Plan.

Progress and Developments

UNICEF has facilitated training and orientation for probation officers, child rights training officers and managers of children's homes throughout the North East, through a partnership project with VSO and the North East Provincial Department of Probation and Child Care Services.

UNICEF is assisting three alternative care institutions in **Kilinochchi** with supplies and other equipment, such as a diesel generator for one institution. In **Mullaitivu**, UNICEF is supporting five alternative care institutions with the construction of buildings, the provision of a water pump and diesel generators and other assistance.

In **Mannar**, UNICEF facilitated a one day child rights awareness training programme for 25 alternative care providers.

In **Batticaloa and Ampara**, UNICEF has approved proposals to support alternative care programmes through three partners, including Christian, Hindu and secular organizations. Minor construction work to improve facilities has commenced and supplies, such as recreational items and material for children's clothing, have also been provided.

In **Ampara**, UNICEF is developing a proposal to set up a safe transit facility for children unable to return home due to abuse or related protection issues. The probation services are also involved in ensuring that children will be reintegrated into the community once they leave the facility. The Divisional Secretariat has provided land for the building.

In **Trincomalee**, UNICEF has provided assistance to eight children's homes throughout the district. Assistance focuses on upgrading the basic facilities in the children's homes and making them more child friendly. This has included: building repair works and the provision of supplies such as play equipment, kitchen utensils and beds.

Annex I

Glossary of Terms


CRPO	Child Rights Promotion Officers
CUE	Catch-Up Education
CWDR	Centre for Women's Development and Rehabilitation
DCPC	District Child Protection Committee
DPCC	Department of Probation and Child Care
DPCCS	Department of Probation and Child Care Services - DPCCS
DPDHS	Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services
EHED	Eastern Human and Economic Development Centre
ESCO	Eastern Self Reliant Community Awakening Organization
EVI	Extremely Vulnerable Individuals
GHC	Gramodaya Health Centre
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISGA	Interim Self-Governing Authority
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoSW	Ministry for Social Welfare
NIE	National Institute of Education
NISD	National Institute of Social Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NYSC	National Youth Services Council
POs	Probation Officers
QUIPs	Quick Impact Projects
REERDO	Rural Economic Education, Research and Development Organization
SCiSL	Save the Children in Sri Lanka
SWOAD	Social Welfare Organization Ampara District
TOT	Training of Trainers
TRO	Tamils Rehabilitation Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WUSC	World University Service Canada
ZDE	Zonal Department of Education

Annex II – Action Plan Budget Allocation

UNICEF Programme budget and funding of main donors against the Action Plan (in USD)

	Child Rights Training	Release and reintegration	Awareness and protection	Education	Health & Nutrition	Psycho-social	Social Work	Alternative Care	Action Plan Development	Total
2003 expenditure	50,000	470,100	270,700	90,000	278,000	20,000	0	67,000	10,000	1,255,800
2004 estimate	70,000	905,500	552,200	800,000	500,000	320,000	830,000	366,000	0	4,343,700
2005 estimate	29,000	515,200	491,200	400,000	240,000	160,000	830,000	96,000	0	2,761,400
Total	149,000	1,890,800	1,314,100	1,290,000	1,018,000	500,000	1,660,000	529,000	10,000	8,360,900
Funding specifically allocated to AP (largely to protection) by UNICEF										
Main Donors										
2002/03										
SIDA		430,000								
DFID		700,000								
CIDA		170,000								
Norway		260,000								
ECHO		0								
UNICEF		600,000								
sub-total		2,160,000								
2004 (up-to-date)										
DFID		650,000								
CIDA		260,000								
AusAID IRF		850,000								
AusAID HAR		230,000								
Japan		0								
SIDA (committed)		500,000								
sub-total		2,490,000								
2005										
Germany (committed)		2,200,000								
sub-total		2,200,000								
Total received+committed		6,850,000								







Annex III Awareness Campaign Materials



**Raja, Karim and Sunil are back.
In the classroom.**

The ceasefire is in progress. The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE want children to study to have a future. An Action Plan for Children affected by War is being set up. The LTTE under the Action Plan have committed to send all children back home. So that children can go back to school or take up vocational training.

Contact one of the following agencies working to implement the Action Plan:














It's true. There will be a change for children

**If you think your child is
with the LTTE,
You can report to UNICEF.**

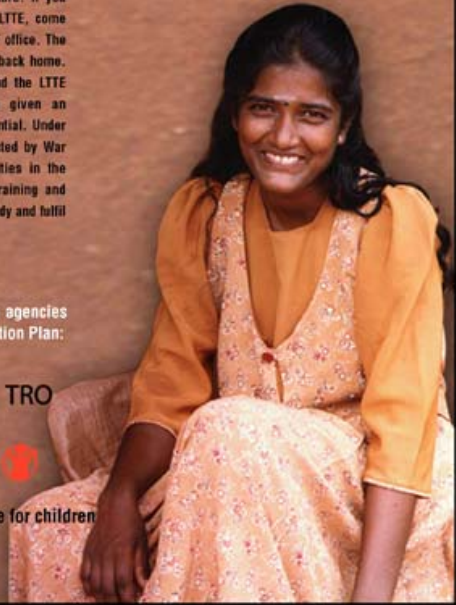
The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE want your children to have a future. If you think that your child is with the LTTE, come and report to your nearest UNICEF office. The LTTE is committed to send them back home. The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE believe that children must be given an opportunity to fulfil their full potential. Under the Action Plan for Children affected by War they will now provide opportunities in the areas of education, vocational training and rehabilitation. So children may study and fulfil their aspirations.

Contact one of the following agencies working to implement the Action Plan:

It's true. There will be a change for children



**Plan your future.
Learn a trade.
Become anyone you want to be!**



The Action Plan for Children affected by War will help you achieve your goals.

The ceasefire is in progress and the fighting has stopped. This is the time to make something out of life and look towards a brighter future. You could become anyone you want to be. The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE have initiated an Action Plan for Children affected by war. The Action Plan enables you to take up vocational training so that you can learn a trade and realise your dreams for a brighter future.

Contact one of the following agencies working to implement the Action Plan:



It's true. There will be a change for children

**Children affected by war
have something to look
forward to.
A future.**

The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE understand how important it is to give your children a future, now that the ceasefire is in progress. To do this the Government and the LTTE have committed to give the children a brighter future. An Action Plan for Children has been signed to provide opportunities in the areas of education, vocational training and health. So children may study and fulfil their aspirations.

Contact one of the following agencies working to implement the Action Plan:



It's true. There will be a change for children



Missed too much school? Sign-up for catch-up education.

The ceasefire is now in progress and the Government and the LTTE want all children to study and stay in school. An Action Plan for Children affected by war is being set up so that even those who need to attend catch up classes can now do so. So study, stay in school and plan for a brighter future.

Contact one of the following agencies working to implement the Action Plan:



It's true. There will be a change for children

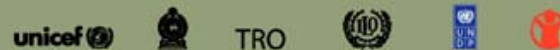


School, Catch-up Education, Health and Nutrition, Vocational Training. Just some of the things your children can expect from the Action Plan for Children affected by War.



The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE understand how important it is to give your children a future, now that the ceasefire is in progress. To do this the Government and the LTTE have committed themselves to give the children a brighter future. They have signed the Action Plan for Children affected by war and important issues such as health, schooling, vocational training are being planned even as you read this.

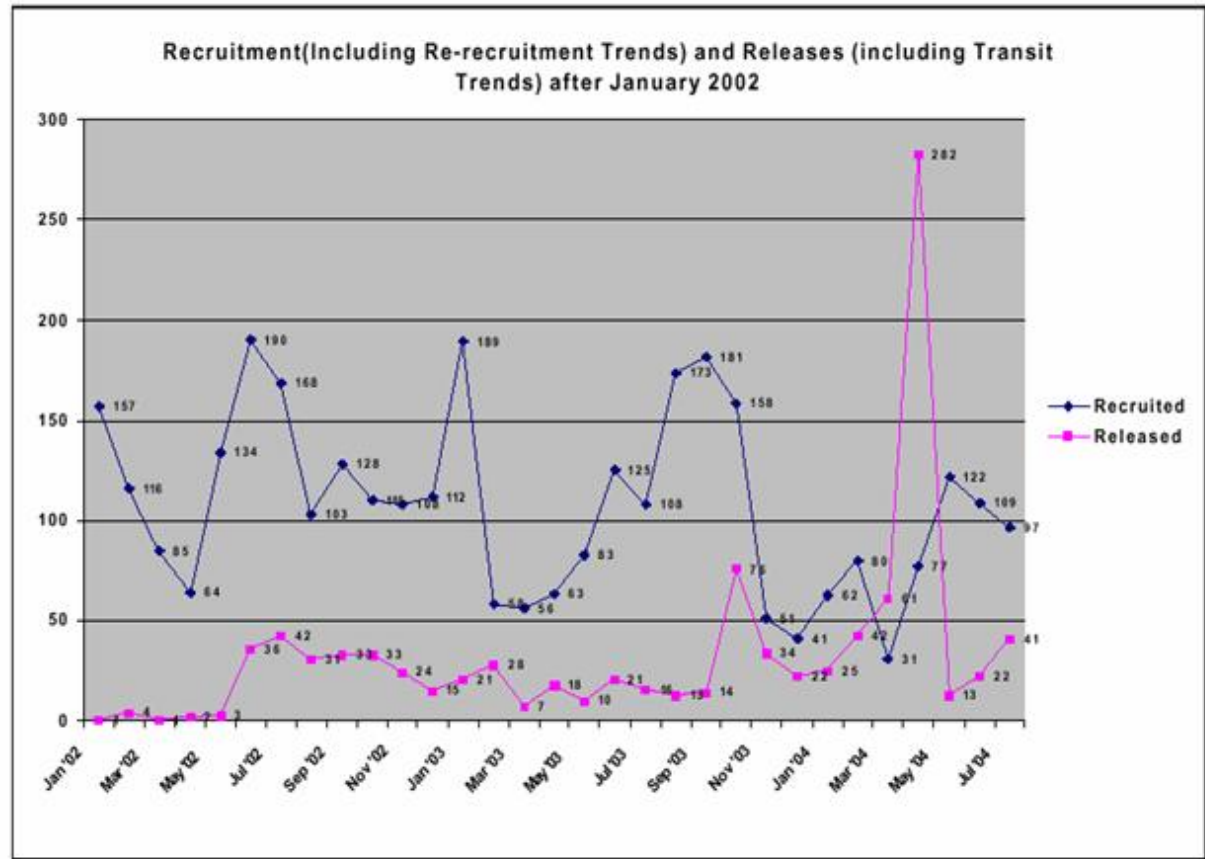
Contact one of the following agencies working to implement the Action Plan:



It's true. There will be a change for children

Annex IV Recruitment and Release Statistics

Annex 4: Recruitment and Releases since January 2002



Please note that this database reflects under-age recruitment known to UNICEF. The overlap between the database and children who have been returned /released is about 23%

NOTE: UNICEF has registered 1642 cases who have returned home; these children will be considered released when they receive formal release letters from the LTTE.