

Children Associated with Fighting Forces (CAFF) in Sudan

Rapid Situation Analysis for Demobilization and Reintegration of CAFF in Government-controlled areas

**Consultant report prepared for
UNICEF Sudan Country Office
Rights, Protection and Peace Building Section**

May 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a rapid situation analysis of children associated with armed forces and armed groups in Government-controlled areas of Southern Sudan. UNICEF has adopted a working figure of 10,000 children associated with such armed groups. Following the globally recognized conception, children associated with fighting forces (CAFF) covered by this analysis include all boys and girls less than 18 years who are involved, in any capacity, in the Sudanese Armed Forces and affiliated para-military, militia or other armed groups.

The field work for this analysis was undertaken over the period 22 March to 26 April 2004. The field work was undertaken with representatives from the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) as part of collaboration between UNICEF and HAC to advance and prepare work in Sudan on CAFF. In addition to Khartoum, locations visited included Bentiu, Juba and Terekeka, Malakal and Wau.

Recent progress in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace negotiations, between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM), in Naivasha Kenya, has provided important openings and momentum for addressing the question of child associated with fighting forces. While children will be a part of the formal demobilization programme envisioned in the expected peace agreement, UNICEF has been working to have children released from armed groups now as a priority child rights and protection issue. An important counter-point to this effort is that, in Southern Sudan, the SPLA has released over 12,000 children from its ranks since 2001.

An objective of the rapid situation analysis was to identify an armed group or location for a pilot child DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) project.¹ While opportunities for 'DDR' work with CAFF were identified, this situation analysis found that significant work remains to be done with political and military authorities to achieve the release of children. In particular, military and militia officials consistently denied the existence of CAFF. Due to political and military sensitivities at both the national and local level, a "pilot project" as originally envisaged is not feasible in the near term.

Despite these constraints, important opportunities on CAFF were identified: a) to 'demobilize' children with one particular militia, and, b) to begin reintegration programming at the local level. In Terekeka Territory, the Mundari Militia emerged as a unique exception to otherwise consistent denial that CAFF existed. The Mundari were open about the involvement of children in their ranks and expressed sincere interest in demobilizing children and in collaborating in

¹ 'DDR' has become a widely used term. It should be noted that while DDR refers to a formal process involving many actors, the same term, or acronym, is often used in more informal situations of gaining the release of children. Because DDR conjures expectations of a formal process, this report often more simply refers to the 'release' and reintegration of children.

reintegration efforts so that these children might access education. Outside of the opportunity with the Mundari Militia, a number of locations in the South feature informal releases of children and a context conducive to establishing reintegration programmes.

Related to official denial of CAFF, this analysis found a high risk that the Armed Forces and some affiliated forces (or militia) will release children, ‘underage members’, in a manner aimed to avoid acknowledging their existence. This makes it all the more vital to initiate community-based, inclusive reintegration programming regardless of how children may be ‘released’ or how formal DDR may proceed. Preparatory work for reintegration programmes is urgently needed; including the development of family tracing capacities, appropriate education modalities and other skill training and social support capacities and partnerships. This will support CAFF already present or returning to their communities, will provide alternatives towards preventing ongoing recruitment, and will build the substantial reception capacity needed for the large numbers of demobilized and returning children expected in the coming months of the peace process.

Table of Contents

Part I – Situation Analysis	4
1. Introduction	4
Context of work on demobilizing children in Sudan.....	5
Background on the conflict in Sudan.....	6
2. Identifying armed groups	7
and the nature of their recruitment and use of children	7
Sudanese Armed Forces	8
Girls	9
‘Jenajesh’	10
Popular Defense Forces	10
Militia or ‘affiliated forces’	11
Bentiu	12
Juba and Terekeka	13
Malakal	15
Wau	16
3. Estimating the number of CAFF	17
4. Opportunities and constraints to demobilize CAFF	17
Opportunities	18
Constraints and Cautions	18
Part II – Recommendations on next steps to UNICEF	20
5. The Way Forward – Start with Reintegration	20
1. Advocacy and Policy Development.....	21
2. Initiate community-based reintegration programming	23
A. Key interventions to advance the national programme framework	23
<i>Coordination and partnerships</i>	23
<i>Family tracing, databases and care arrangements</i>	24
<i>Developing and facilitating life-skill and education modalities</i>	24
B. Immediate opportunities to begin work with CAFF	27
<i>The Mundari Militia</i>	27
<i>Wau and other opportunities</i>	28
6. Conclusion	29
Annex -- Acronyms	30
Annex – Highlights from Focus Groups	31
Annex – Selected references	36

Part I – Situation Analysis

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a rapid situation analysis of children involved in armed groups in Government-controlled garrison towns and surrounding areas of Southern Sudan. Children associated with fighting forces (CAFF) covered by this situation analysis include boys and girls under 18 years who are involved, in any capacity, in the GoS Army or affiliated paramilitary or militia.² UNICEF has adopted a working figure of 10,000 children associated with such armed groups.

The field work was undertaken over the period 22 March to 26 April 2004. In addition to work in Khartoum, the locations visited included Bentiu, Juba and Terekeka, Malakal and Wau. The field work was undertaken with the participation of representatives from the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC)³ as part of collaboration between UNICEF and HAC to advance and prepare work in Sudan on CAFF.

In addition to interviews in Khartoum and review of key documents, methodologies for the analysis included key informant and focus group interviews in each of the above locations. We interviewed Military Intelligence representatives with the Army in all locations and were able to meet with militia commanders in most locations. Interviews in each location also included Governors, or '*walis*', State-level Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and Humanitarian Affairs, international NGOs and key members of civil society such as religious leaders and traditional elders. Focus group interviews were held with children, including CAFF, and women's or community groups in each location except Bentiu where this was not feasible for security and protection reasons. While this report identifies and discusses different armed groups in Sudan, its purpose is exclusively to develop a better understanding of, and preparation for, the release and reintegration of CAFF.

In addition to the participation and collaboration with HAC, this rapid situation analysis was undertaken in collaboration with the work of two other UNICEF child protection consultants undertaking other preparatory work towards increasing the release, demobilization and reintegration of children. One of the consultants is working to identify and develop family tracing and alternative care systems for child soldiers and other separated children and the consultant is focusing on strategies and partner capacities for community reintegration of child soldiers and other returning vulnerable children.⁴

² The term 'Children Associated with Fighting Forces' (CAFF) has been adopted in Sudan to be clear about the definition of 'child soldier'. This follows best practice in child protection work globally, which has come to adopt terms such as 'children associated in armed groups' rather than 'child soldiers'. The UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (S/2000/101 of 11 February 2000) provides the highest level definition of 'child soldier': "A child soldier has been defined as any person under 18 years of age who forms part of an armed force in any capacity, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members, as well as girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage."

³ HAC, under the GoS Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, is responsible for humanitarian response and coordination of humanitarian action between the government and international and local organisations, including the United Nations. It is important to note that all humanitarian staff are required to obtain travel permits from HAC. HAC has been designated to lead the DDR portfolio for the GoS.

⁴ Reports from the other two UNICEF consultants will be available separately from the UNICEF Khartoum office.

Context of work on demobilizing children in Sudan

Recent progress in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace negotiations⁵ between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM/SPLA), in Naivasha Kenya, has provided important openings and momentum for addressing the question of child soldiers. While children will be a part of the formal demobilization programme envisioned with the expected peace agreement, UNICEF has been working to have children released from armed groups as a priority child rights and protection issue. In fact, taking the frame of Sudan as a whole, it is important to note that the SPLA has already released over 12,000 children from its ranks since 2001.

Efforts on CAFF in government-controlled garrison towns and areas (often referred to as ‘the North’) have developed more recently. Indeed the climate for many years has been one of fear to speak out, fear to mention human rights generally, let alone raise concern about child recruitment. More recently, attention and action within Sudan on the issue of abducted children within the Lord’s Resistance Army⁶ and progress in the peace negotiations opened opportunities for expanded dialogue between UNICEF and other advocates with the GoS. UNICEF convened a groundbreaking workshop on CAFF with HAC in February 2003, which included participation from the military and child protection NGOs. UNICEF also supported HAC to convene an internal government meeting on CAFF in September 2003.

HAC and UNICEF are working together, within the frame of a GoS Technical Task force on DDR, in formulating policies and planning for child DDR. A ‘child technical task force’ was formed in July 2003, will be under an inter-ministerial working group HAC is establishing for GoS policy and actions on adult DDR, but the designation of ministerial representatives and other steps is proceeding slowly. UNICEF is also working closely with UNDP and DPKO as the lead UN entities who will be supporting the government (and SPLM/A) on the formal DDR programme to be implemented upon signing of the peace agreement. With the support of UNICEF and other UN partners, HAC has prepared: “The Government of Sudan Framework for the Formal Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (DDR) and Removal of Children from Fighting Forces in Sudan”, which is referred to as a ‘draft concept note’. Importantly, this inter-ministerial work led to the HAC concept note including the following, inclusive definition of CAFF:

“any person, male or female, under the age of 18 years who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group, including but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups other than purely as family members. It includes boys or girls who have become separated from their families and are now in the care of soldiers and children recruited for sexual purposes and/or forced marriage. It does not, therefore only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried, weapons.”

Pending the formal establishment of GoS inter-ministerial groups and processes for DDR, UNICEF and HAC are proceeding where possible, in recognition that the removal of children from fighting forces is not dependent on the political and security rationale for the formal force

⁵ The IGAD Sudan Peace Initiative has been the forum for a series of protocols and agreements between the GoS and the SPLM. The commitment to a negotiated, peaceful, comprehensive resolution to the conflict was set forth in the “Machakos Protocol” of July 2002. The current cease-fire and envisaged coherent DDR programme was set in the “Framework Agreement on Security Arrangements during the Interim Period” of 25 September 2003.

⁶ The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) is a Ugandan rebel group operating out of Southeastern Sudan. The LRA has violently and forcibly abducted thousands of children from Northern Uganda to serve in their ranks. In the context of joint Sudanese-Ugandan action against the LRA in 2002, UNICEF and the GoS initiated a special project to respond to women and children who escape the LRA within Sudan.

reduction and DDR process being developed. Indeed, Sudan national legislation already establishes 18 years as the minimum age for conscription and Sudan is already party to international treaties and conventions protecting children from armed conflict. Further, the GoS signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (Optional Protocol) in May 2002, and the National Assembly has received the late 2003 decision of the Council of Ministers to ratify the Optional Protocol.

In addition to the above efforts with the government and linkages to the peace negotiations, UNICEF has convened a working group of international NGOs⁷ to establish a common framework for work on CAFF.⁸ A Concept Note, “The removal of children from Government of Sudan-linked fighting forces and their reintegration into the community”, has been agreed between UNICEF, the working group and HAC. The Concept Note provides guiding principles, strategies and an outline of activities for the planned CAFF programme.

Background on the conflict in Sudan

Describing the conflict in Sudan is beyond the scope of this report and situation analysis, however it is important to underscore key factors that make it particularly complex and multi-faceted. In view of current media attention, it is important to note that the IGAD peace process does not include the Darfur region. The Naivasha peace negotiations address the two decades North-South conflict between the GoS and the SPLM with clauses that the GoS and SPLM represent other affiliated militia.

The question of ‘other armed groups’ or ‘affiliated militia’ is central to work with CAFF and to the prospects for peace. The conflict in South Sudan has featured a complex web of formal and non-formal militia, many of whom have splintered and switched sides throughout the conflict. Militia affiliated with the government fall under special desks within the Military Intelligence section of the Army, but are not under a coordinated ‘command and control’ structure and some are not fully under the government’s control. Some militia have been deployed in different areas of the conflict while others are more specifically tribe or clan based and have only been mobilized under the objective of defending their community or traditional territory. Importantly, as part of the process for the peace agreement, most militia members will fall geographically under a new, semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan. For many who have been supported by and affiliated with the government, this means demobilizing and being integrated or incorporated into political, security and civil structures for which the SPLM is the lead player. Other armed groups or militias are addressed in the Agreements and Protocols signed to date as follows:

- “No armed group allied to either party shall be allowed to operate outside the two forces.”
- Provisions call for other armed groups to either be integrated into the Sudanese Armed Forces or SPLA or to be demobilized and integrated into civil service institutions such as the police and wildlife services.
- “The parties agree to address the status of other armed groups in the country with the view of achieving comprehensive peace and stability in the country and to realize full inclusiveness in the transition process.”

⁷ CAFF working group participants include: Enfants du Monde, HelpAge, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children (UK, US and Sweden), War Child – Netherlands. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is also actively participating in the working group and has committed to supporting special family tracing assistance to CAFF.

⁸ UNDP has also created a multi-agency working group on DDR with which the UNICEF and international NGO working group maintains links.

Among the complex impacts of the 20 year long conflict, it is striking to see the extent to which the socio-economic fabric of government-controlled areas in the South is almost completely militarized. For example, many goods are only accessible through military connections and market stalls are often owned by an Army soldier. Cooperatives and community self-organized education efforts have been disbanded for years as the political-military authorities forbade people from meeting in groups. As one local official expressed, “there has been a complete stomping out of initiative”. Fuel for electricity in towns is supplied by the Army and militia commanders are appointed as Governors, Commissioners and other political-civil positions.⁹ Government support to the militia is comprised of a monthly food ration, as well as, arms, uniforms and other such materiel.¹⁰ Coupled with a lack of basic social services, displacement, loss of livestock and fields, poverty and even famine, being part of a militia is often the only option to survive and find a daily meal.

2. Identifying armed groups and the nature of their recruitment and use¹¹ of children

As noted above, this situation analysis focused on the Armed Forces of the Government of Sudan and any affiliated paramilitary or militia groups. Armed groups outside of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), were consistently acknowledged as obligated to follow government policy on recruitment. In particular, all interviews with Military Intelligence and militia commanders confirmed that militias are obliged to follow the government policy on 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment. In fact, militias are referred to as ‘military formations’, ‘affiliated forces’, or ‘friendly forces’.

Human rights reporting has frequently raised concern about the recruitment and use of children by the GoS and affiliated militia.¹² For example, as recently as October 2002, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and April 2003, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, expressed concern at the continued recruitment and use of children in the conflict in Sudan, by the Government and other forces, in violation of international law.¹³ One of the more extensive

⁹ In ‘the North’, political-administrative divisions in Sudan are States, Provinces or Territories, and Localities. Thus Governors are the political head of a State and Commissioners the political head of a Territory. In the South, the political-administrative terms are Region, County and Payam.

¹⁰ Sources of information for this situation analysis report that government support to militia does not include regular monetary incentives or salaries.

¹¹ In this situation analysis report, the phrases ‘involvement of children’, ‘affiliation of children’ and ‘use of children’ are used inter-changeably. The phrase ‘recruitment and use of children’ is how the involvement of children in armed groups is often expressed in international law. The prohibition on the ‘use of children’ helps to underscore that armed groups must not involve children in any capacity; including as spies, messengers, cooks, porters, ‘girlfriends’, etc. For reference, the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, which was an extensive effort to codify existing and customary law, makes it a war crime to “*conscript or enlist children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces or groups or use them to participate actively in hostilities*”. The age of 15 years is the minimum obligation of all parties to a conflict globally and is progressively increasing through ratifications of the Optional Protocol to the CRC. The age is already 18 years in the case of Sudan due to national law.

¹² Reports that may be of interest to the reader include: US State Department annual report for 2000; “Sudan: Empty Promises? Human Rights violations in Government-controlled areas,” Amnesty International, Index: AFR 54/036/2003, 16 July 2003; and “Children in Sudan: Slaves, Street Children and Child Soldiers”, September 1995 by Human Rights Watch.

¹³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Thirty-First Session, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention, “Concluding Observations: The Sudan”, CRC/C/15/Add.190, 9 October 2002. Commission on Human Rights, “Question of the Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in any Part of The World, The situation of human rights in Sudan,” E/CN.4/2003/L.35, 11 April 2003.

investigations on the topic was undertaken by Human Rights Watch back in 1995.¹⁴ This report documented widespread under-age conscription by Army Officials and the para-military Popular Defense Forces (PDF). Conscription practices included setting up check-points from which children as young as 12 years old were recruited, and conscription from street children's 'camps'. Indeed the recruitment and use of children in Sudan features overlaps with street children, separated children and abductions by tribal militias.¹⁵

This situation analysis found on-going recruitment, as young as 12 years old, to be particularly blatant in Bentiu. Local sources estimate that 75% of children recruited have been taken from schools; resulting in a complete disruption of education as parents keep children at home due to fear of recruitment. One source described the situation in Bentiu as not so much recruitment, but "slavery in a different form of the word". In addition, children have been forcibly recruited in Khartoum and taken to the armed groups in Bentiu. This has been documented by the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT) which has been mandated by both the GoS and SPLM to investigate and monitor human rights abuses against civilians.¹⁶

The involvement of children was almost uniformly denied in official interviews for this situation analysis. Some interviews with Military Intelligence allowed that there have been cases of children recruited by militia groups, but asserted that these were exceptions and reported that they intervene to release children when they discovered such cases. Only one militia group, the Mundari Forces, was open about their use of children and a couple of others acknowledged the issue in more general terms, for example, by acknowledging that children may have been involved 'in the past' or expressing concern about reintegrating children affected by the conflict.

While armed groups and some recruitment violations identified below are from public and acknowledged sources, most information on children affiliated with armed groups presented in this situation analysis came from other interviews. Some State Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and Humanitarian Affairs spoke openly about the issue and, impressively, community groups and children themselves were passionate in expressing their concern about the issue, including their own involvement or loss of family members and peers.

Sudanese Armed Forces

Children become involved in the Armed Forces through recruitment, but the most extensive pattern found was the use of children as "wives" or "houseboys" in Army barracks. Regarding recruitment, a number of sources reported that boys less than 18 years of age are recruited or sent to the Armed Forces through the National Service mechanism. In 1992, Sudan introduced a National Service Law requiring at least one year of 'service' for all men between 18 and 33 years of age. Secondary school certificates and university degrees are dependent on service.

¹⁴ Ibid. "Children in Sudan", September 1995, Human Rights Watch.

¹⁵ Discourse on abduction in Sudan mainly refers to patterns of abduction, slavery or forced labour. The situation that has perhaps received the most attention is where Baggara militia, " *Murahaleen*", supported by the Sudanese Army, carried out raids against Dinka civilians while accompanying and guarding trains of troops and supplies into Wau, Bahr el Ghazal. There are also traditional tribal practices where women and children may be abducted, along with cattle-raiding, during traditional disputes. (Cfr. "Eight Grassroots Conflicts in Sudan" by Dr Paul Wani Gore et al, sponsored by UNICEF, March 2004.) This situation analysis found that abducted boys are sometimes used in conflict, by the militia which abducted them, but there is not an automatic linkage between abduction and involvement in fighting forces.

¹⁶ "Final Report of Investigation: Kalakla Area Forced Conscriptions", 2 December 2003, Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT). The CPMT was mandated by the IGAD interim peace agreements to monitor and investigate human rights violations against civilians. Also reference "Statement by Mr. Gerhart Baum, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, UN Commission on Human Rights", April 2003.

In January 1995, special calls went out for all citizens to join Popular Defense training camps. (The Popular Defense Forces, PDF, were created in 1989 and are discussed in the next section.) In 1995, the Ministry of Defense admitted that the conscription was so unpopular¹⁷, it was requiring civil servants and many from the private sector 18 to 33 years of age to serve. Abuses of under-age recruitment are perhaps not surprising in view of the massive unpopularity of compulsory service.¹⁸ For example, it was during this period that the Army and PDF set up checkpoints to forcibly check identification documents or rounded up males appearing to be near 18 during recreational or social activities. Many interviews for this situation analysis included personal testimonies of those who served under-age, of the experience of their sons, and of civil service colleagues and peers who were killed or handicapped when sent to the front lines after only weeks of the compulsory training in the Popular Defense camps.

Creating confusion about 'national service', in 1997 the government issued a Decree by which all males between 17 to 19 years of age are obliged to perform between 12 and 18 months compulsory military service. Many sources reported that lists of students, prepared by secondary schools for the National Service, exclude the ages of the students, facilitating the pattern that students are called for national service regardless of age. While recruitment abuses continue to be reported as part of the 'national service' mechanism, the involvement of children as soldiers in the Army seems to have declined in recent years.

Girls

The most extensive pattern of girls associated with fighting forces found during this situation analysis concerns Army soldiers "taking local girls" as "informal wives". Interviews in Wau and Malakal went so far as to note a pattern of social pressure within Army ranks whereby soldiers are encouraged to take "local wives" in order to avoid suspicions or accusations of 'having affairs' with another soldier's girlfriend. Many reported that soldiers coerce and entice girls selling tea and working in markets to become their girlfriend and a few reported that girls are taken more forcibly. In a number of interviews, it was also reported that girls living near an Army barrack or post are subject to rape and that community members and local leaders, including police officers, feel powerless to complain. Some sources also reported that girls engaged in activities such as fetching water for, or selling beer to, Army soldiers are often raped.

In most cases, it was reported that soldiers simply abandon a girl once she becomes pregnant and take a new "wife". Very few stay with the soldier if he is redeployed to a different location. In fact some sources reported cases of girls being taken as "wives" two, three or even more times as soldiers rotate or re-deploy. The girls are not paid but are assured regular meals, clothing and occasionally other goods.

Preliminary indications during this situation analysis report that most girls, and their offspring, are re-accepted by their families. However, it is important to explore this with more specific focus groups with girls and women. For example, in a few interviews with youth, other girls were reported to be rejected by their families or choosing not to go back to them. In one interview, some girls were reported to be living in small groups and having difficulty renting rooms due to 'landlord' or community suspicions.

¹⁷ The HRW 1995 report quotes testimony by the Ministry of Defence to the government that as of "June 1995 only 26,079 out of the 2.5 million [men between the ages of 18 and 33] had turned up for training".

¹⁸ The 1995 HRW report also quotes a June 1995 BBC radio report in which the Defence Minister admits "some errors during roundups for military service".

‘Jenajesh’

The other particular pattern identified regarding the Armed Forces concerns young boys serving as “houseboys”. The local term for such boys is ‘*jenajesh*’. They are usually 8 to 12 years old and higher ranking soldiers and officers are allowed have multiple ‘*jenajesh*’. Sources reported that boys become ‘*jenajesh*’ in a number of ways. Some are taken in as ‘orphans’, ‘found’, or abducted, following a military operation. Others live near Army barracks or outposts and are enticed by the promise of regular meals. Indeed, military posts are often the only place with regular food. Children interviewed who are not involved in fighting forces report having friends or knowing of children from their community that are ‘*jenajesh*’. Under the circumstances, due to the extensive poverty and displacement, finding the means to have a regular meal, clothing and even health care by being a ‘*jenajesh*’ is a reasonable survival option. Many ‘*jenajesh*’ go on to join the Army as they get older. In fact some join the Army as part of escaping the mistreatment rendered on ‘*jenajesh*’.

The nature of the involvement of children in the Armed Forces raises specific family tracing needs in the event of release or demobilization. Those who are recruited under-age and ‘*jenajesh*’ move with their officer or group and may have been re-deployed to different locations a number of times. Many will have lost contact with family members, had no opportunity to pursue family tracing for many years, and will be some distance away from their community.

‘*Jenajesh*’ may even have lost their civil, social and cultural identity as some were taken at very young ages and have been given new names. It will be especially challenging to raise the issue of ‘*jenajesh*’ with the Armed Forces as they claim the children are orphans and are being given a good opportunity as the “houseboy” of an officer. They will unlikely be viewed as under-age boys that should be demobilized.

It is important to note that children involved in the Army as ‘girlfriends’, ‘illegal wives’ and ‘*jenajesh*’ arises as an unexpected issue to some local authorities but is explicitly part of the CAFF definition, as explained earlier in this report and as adopted by the Concept Note and official DDR planning documents. During this situation analysis, both of these issues arose consistently concerning the Armed Forces and less so regarding the militia or ‘affiliated forces’. Thus the main ‘entry point’ or access to such CAFF may be part of the reduction of forces and their re-deployment to the North as part of the peace process. Because the SAF will be less affected by forthcoming formal DDR, as compared to the militia, and because there is such a strong and consistent denial of the association of children generally, there is a high risk that ‘girlfriends’ and ‘*jenajesh*’ will be informally ‘released’ or abandoned as the movement North becomes a reality, rather than being accessed by the DDR process. Another reality is that ‘girlfriends’ and ‘*jenajesh*’ do not view themselves as needing to be ‘demobilized’. Many certainly desire to be, and need to be, ‘released’ and supported in reintegration but the formal process of ‘demobilization’ may in itself be an obstacle to meeting the rights and needs of these children. Both of these realities underscore the importance of developing inclusive, community-based reintegration programmes in the immediate term and as elaborated at the end of this report in section 5.

Popular Defense Forces

Children have been recruited by the Popular Defense Forces (PDF), but it has been more difficult to get information about their structure, practices and possible approaches for gaining their release. As described above, this is in part due to the blurred lines between the PDF, Armed Forces, and National Service.

Some estimate that the majority of PDF are children and some report that PDF forces are more powerful than the Army, receiving higher levels of pay and incentives. Interviews in Bentiu explained that the PDF operated with the Army, working in the most sensitive oil locations. They estimated the PDF represent 2,000 out of 10,000 Army-related forces. However, sources also indicate that PDF recruitment efforts have been unsuccessful in many locations in the South, due to the often overt Islamic region orientation.

We were only able to interview the PDF in Wau as part of this situation analysis. In Wau, the PDF acknowledged that children were recruited based on size rather than ‘accuracy in following the law to not recruit those less than 17 years old’. They reported that training was both military and social with deployments for 4 month periods followed by rotations “determined by Khartoum”. However, the PDF in Wau emphasized that with the peace process, their current objective is “social change for the community”, with “a focus on literacy classes for women and youth”, rather than a military role.

The PDF, created in 1989, is a government sponsored para-military force that has always featured an Islamist social agenda. During this situation analysis, the PDF were referred to as ‘*mujhadein*’, ‘*deph shabi*’, ‘*fasha*’, ‘national defense force’ or ‘popular police’. In the past, the PDF was sometimes referred to as the National Army. Many sources pointed to the role of the PDF in encouraging civilians in the South to become Muslims, including by placing Qu’ran schools, ‘*khalwa*’, next to rural military posts as education opportunities.¹⁹ In Juba, sources, including some military officials, reported that foreign Arabs were among the PDF members, indicating specific compounds in town used as PDF bases, but reported that almost all PDF forces had left or been airlifted to the Darfur region in the last year or two.

Since 1994, PDF training camps were established for ‘all young men of university age’. Many sources reported that civil servants and many others were also obliged to undergo the training as part of keeping their job and that, contrary to stated policy, many were sent to the front-lines before even this brief training was completed.

Today, PDF training camps continue and local understandings and activities ‘on the ground’ continue to blur distinctions between the PDF and the formal Armed Forces. For example, PDF training camps are often described as obligatory, 45-day training sessions (held during the summer school closing period of May and June) for ‘student cadets’ as part of National Service. A local newspaper in Khartoum reported, in April 2004, that a new camp was soon to be opened in Malakal. The training is required to get university degree and a certificate is given at the end of the training so that participants have evidence of completion. However, sources report that in reality, ‘round ups’, ‘*kasha*’, including of children working in markets and street children, are practiced to gather participants for the training sessions. In fact, sources report that trainees are airlifted to the training camp location to prevent their ability to leave. For example, during our visit to Juba, a military plane of 300 trainees arrived from Khartoum on 6 April. The Juba training camp is located 6 kilometers outside of town.

Militia or ‘affiliated forces’

Militias affiliated with the government operate under the support and instruction of the ‘bush desks’²⁰ of the Military Intelligence arm of the Ministry of Defense. There are approximately 25 militias; most of which, since the 1997 Khartoum Agreement, are organized under the South

¹⁹ Sources report that the religious and moral training component of the Armed Forces also historically featured an Islamist agenda.

²⁰ ‘Bush desks’ officially, in Arabic, are GUJSH – Gowat Wataneya Sha’abeya.

Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) umbrella.²¹ There were intermittent efforts to form mobile SSDF units in 2000, but, these were largely Riek Machar's forces, were especially unpopular in a Juba deployment and have mostly been re-aligned. The Khartoum-based South Sudan Coordinating Council (SSCC) is the political umbrella of the SSDF.

In addition to mobilizing militia and overseeing their operations, the GoS Armed Forces support the militia with arms, uniforms, other materiel and a monthly food ration. Monetary incentives or support to militia is inconsistent at best. Some militia commanders have been given Army titles and ranks and thus receive the salary associated with that rank. This has been a pronounced upward trend since the cease-fire agreement in what appears to be preparations for changing roles in the near future.

Across all militia, children become involved through both "voluntary" and forced recruitment. Tactics include taking one male from every household, requiring chiefs to provide certain numbers of new recruits, and conscription directly from schools, market places and homes. Almost all militia are based on tribal, clan and geographic community identities. In fact most have refused requests from Military Intelligence to deploy to locations outside of their community.²² This creates a socio-cultural context for claims of 'voluntary' recruitment. In some cases, young boys were traditionally involved in local conflicts over cattle or access to land and water sources such that they transitioned easily into more formal community militia. Indeed many ethnic groups place a high social value on their 'warriors'. Interviews portrayed an environment where a boy has no choice but to join, but that it would be extremely rare for a girl to be involved in a militia. In Bentiu, it was reported that girls might be "made to serve as porters for a day or two at a time" but then are allowed to return home.

The SSCC may still have some influence as a policy and political body, but constant re-alignments and splintering require the militias to be considered individually. As noted above, militias are not under a coordinated 'command and control' structure and some are not fully under the government's control. Thus this report identifies and discusses specific groups by the location visited.

Bentiu

The two main militia in the Bentiu-Rubkona area, Unity State, are the Southern Sudanese Independence Movement (SSIM) and Southern Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM).²³ Both groups are Nuer but from different clans. SSIM and SSUM are rivals but both fight against the SPLA. Bentiu-Rubkona features Bentiu as the political locale and Rubkona as the traditional commercial centre, with a floating bridge connecting the two sides. Bentiu is critically located within areas of oil exploration and production.

²¹ "The Sudan Peace Agreement", Khartoum, 21 April, 1997. Differences between the 1997 Khartoum Agreement (between the GoS and the militia under the SSDF) and provisions in the Protocols and Agreements signed towards a comprehensive peace agreement between the GoS and the SPLM are an important source of discontent. For example, the 1997 Khartoum Agreement provided for 40% of oil revenues to be allocated to oil producing States, principally Unity State and the Nuer Militias' areas of operation, as compared to 2% now provided in the "Agreement on Wealth Sharing During the Pre-Interim and Interim Period", Navaisha, January 7th, 2004.

²² Notable exceptions include the mobile SSDF units described above and the deployment of largely Nuer-based militia to the current fighting around the Shilluk Kingdom.

²³ SSUM is led by Paulino Matib and Peter Gadet; Matib has also been the head of the SSDF since 2001. The spokesperson and personal doctor of Matib is now the Governor of Unity State. SSIM, originally led by Riek Machar but, as he realigned with the SPLA in 2002, SSIM is currently led by James Leath.

As noted, conflict between SSIM and SSUM has been especially intense since 2002 due to issues around oil exploration and exploitation and following the departure of the leader of SSIM to rejoin the SPLM/A. There was especially overt, wide-scale recruitment in 2003 and the environment continues to be extremely tense and fearful. Sources reported that “even headmasters and churches are not able to follow up” cases of recruitment. Many inhabitants are not able to move between Bentiu and Rubkona, including the local HAC official, because extended family members may be with one side or the other. As another indicator of the tense environment, even the Sudanese Red Crescent has had their access curtailed for work with the war-wounded and volunteers conducting immunization campaigns have been arrested and beaten. We were not able to have focus groups with children or women’s groups due to their fear to even be seen talking to outsiders. Sources explained that “any gathering, including education, is a potential target”. Special efforts to release humanitarian workers that are forcibly conscripted have required direct negotiations and interventions with militia commanders, rather than the Army or Military Intelligence being able to assist or influence the practice. Further, sources report a worrying pattern where humanitarian staff or more wealthy civilians, or those with relatively wealthy relatives, are targeted for ‘recruitment’ with the objective of obtaining large ransom payments. In this sense, many sources described ‘recruitment’ as being more like organized crime: “it was easier to deal with recruitment than this mafia behavior”.

Forcible recruitment of children has been especially high and violent in the Bentiu area, both historically and currently. Child soldiers, and recently raided herds of cattle, were openly visible during our visit. Sources estimate 3,000 - 4,000 CAFF in Unity State. Sources estimated that 75% of the ‘bodyguards’ for commanders are 12 years old or younger and that they are targeted for recruitment because “they just follow orders and will not ask for money to feed their family”. Regarding girls, sources report they have observed a few women soldiers and know of maybe 2 or 3 cases of girls in SSIM and SSUM. The main pattern concerning girls was reported to be that they are sometimes used as porters in far villages, but that they are released quickly due to strong traditions protecting girls and wives. Significant cases of child recruitment that have been documented, include a group of 667 children (boys) taken from a school in January 2003.²⁴ Families with financial means, including officials with whom we met, send their children to relatives in Khartoum or elsewhere for protection and the opportunity to continue schooling.

It is also important to note that Nuer militias have been deployed outside of their communities. In the past they were deployed in Juba (under the SSDF umbrella) and currently factions originally from Unity are engaged in the fighting in Shilluk Kingdom, around and in Malakal and Nasir. Thus future work on CAFF with SSIM and SSUM and forces around Malakal will likely feature a particular need for family tracing.

Juba and Terekeka

Contrary to Bentiu, the cease-fire has largely held in the Juba area. This analysis and other reports are finding examples of civilians being able to cross-lines; such as spontaneous refugee and IDP returns, including former CAFF looking for family. Importantly, our visit identified a militia who is open about their involvement of children and ready to release them and support their reintegration – the Mundari Militia.

The Mundari are a tribe based in the Territory of Terekeka. With some exceptions, the Mundari are very much a community-based militia who has not operated outside their territory.²⁵

²⁴ United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Question of The Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in any Part of The World, “The situation of human rights in Sudan”, E/CN.4/2003/L.35, 11 April 2003.

²⁵ The Mundari Militia are referred to locally as “commandos”.

Commanders interviewed explained that each of 28 militia ‘posts’ or ‘stations’ are formed by the relevant part of town, village, or community and that they are all quite far from Army barracks.

The Mundari have a long-standing reputation of recruiting and using children. Recruitment often took the form of forced conscription: each chief was required to submit a list of households and the militia would come during the night, to prevent escape, to take one boy or young man from each household. The most recent recruitment drive was in early 2003. However, rather than mobilizing for new fighting, this recruitment coincided with the conferring of military ranks to certain militia commanders such that the objective of the recruitment was to boost numbers to “legitimize” the titles and receive the relevant support and food rations from the Armed Forces. During our mission, commanders spoke openly about recruiting boys from the age of 9 and that older boys, age 15-17, are nicknamed the “Rat Army”. Some of those interviewed explained that they specifically took younger boys because “they know less, are easier to control” and “older boys will choose to leave”. Commanders also reported that during quiet times, many stay at home, especially younger boys, until they are needed. Indeed many were called from their nearby homes to meet with us. Sources estimate there are 2,000 boys associated with the Mundari.

While the Mundari are a tribe and comprise the great majority of these militia forces, reports indicate that children of other tribes, notably Dinka, were sometimes recruited. Earlier reports of child recruitment by the Mundari include sending them to Army-run training camps, including camps near Khartoum or other locations.

As indicated previously, there are no reports of girls serving within the ranks of the Mundari. Sources in the Juba – Terekeka area reported that girls are taken as “wives” by Army soldiers and noted a particular pattern of sexual violence in certain areas. Contrary to most inputs to this situation analysis, some reported that when girls become pregnant, the soldier leaves the girl to go back to her family, but later takes the child and seeks to raise the child back in Khartoum. In other cases, it was reported that such situations led to ‘early marriage by force’ because the soldiers have money to offer the family. In a rare response to sexual violence, a military interview reported that some cases of rape have been taken to military court resulting in dismissals and a decrease in this problem. This source recommended that more efforts be made to raise awareness with parents as this will help them to have the courage to complain and bring cases forward.²⁶

As indicated, the Mundari were the only militia we identified who openly acknowledged and discussed the involvement of children. Indeed, the Commissioner of Terekeka has already made a ‘policy statement’ that everyone under 18 years should be released and sent to school. Interviews supported and even requested help to ‘demobilize’ children and facilitate opportunities for education. Discussion and recommendations towards working with the Mundari are presented later in this report.

Other militias in the Juba area (Equatoria and Jongley States) include the Equatorial Defense Forces (EDF) and Murle Militia. Sources reported that a new Bari militia was formed in 2003 but that its organization and purpose remain unclear.²⁷ In February 2004, most EDF forces followed the EDF leadership to align with the SPLA. Sources in Juba report that remaining EDF fighters, including children, appear to be “self-demobilizing one-by-one”.²⁸ As this situation analysis focused on work with CAFF for government-controlled areas, the EDF re-alignment

²⁶ In a discussion on this topic during our Wau mission, sources reported that even the police commissioner would not bring forward a case regarding the rape of his two daughters because he knew the perpetrators were soldiers and he was afraid.

²⁷ The Bari are a tribe whose language is similar to Mundari.

²⁸ Similarly, the Taposia militia disbanded so that information about children involved remains unknown.

with the SPLA implies that that work related to this group will be from the South as the peace process and affiliations of other armed groups evolve. However, close collaboration will continue to be essential as access to different locations develops.²⁹

The Murle Militia, also known as Pibor Forces or Forces of Peace, have a fierce reputation and their leader is currently the Governor of Jongley State. Murle traditional practices of abducting children continue,³⁰ but links between abduction and recruitment remain unclear. We were not able to meet with representatives of the Murle Militia or gain current information about their recruitment and use of children.

Malakal

The conflict situation in Malakal is relatively new and information on militia unclear but conflict has been a constant feature of the broader Upper Nile area. Malakal is the ‘capital’ of the ‘Shilluk Kingdom’ which until recently had avoided being drawn into the conflict. In fact, IDP settlements, hosted by local Shilluk and protected by a nearby Army post, feature a mix of tribes, including Dinka, Murle and Nuer. The area along the Sobat river, from Nasir at the Ethiopian border to Malakal, features opposing forces literally on opposite sides of the river to each other.

Nuer militia, as noted above regarding SSIM and SSUM, are deployed in the area and fighting has been especially heavy in recent months; including the use of heavy weaponry and gun-boats by the Armed Forces.³¹ While the SSDF is a common factor in these militias, they are different clans of Nuer and interviews refer to militia more by the name of a current or former leader’s name or by the name of the village where they are located.³² These ‘leaders’ may in turn be Commissioners or traditional chiefs.

While the fighting around Malakal itself may be a new development, the two decades conflict has regularly afflicted Upper Nile State and the area. Sources reported that the affiliation of children in armed groups is widespread; in fact estimating that 50% of each primary school class eventually becomes involved in armed groups. An education official indicated that some 40% of schools in one Province are no longer functioning due to attacks and recruitment. Civil authorities noted that the extent of the problem includes children ‘working’ for soldiers who are then easily recruited. Interviews with community members emphasized that children are enticed into armed groups because of hunger, displacement and tribalism rather than overt recruitment. As noted earlier in this report, this extends to girls being enticed to be the ‘illegal wife’ of a soldier by promises of food. A focus group of IDP youth, displaced in the early 1990s, spoke openly about boys joining either the Army or the SPLA due to hunger and girls ‘getting illegally married’ two and three times to soldiers over years.

²⁹ In addition, the EDF are primarily Acholi and have been involved in actions of both the GoS and SPLA concerning the LRA. In one interview, an informed source predicted that longer term child protection work may find LRA abductees among EDF populations.

³⁰ Research on traditional conflicts supported by UNICEF indicates that the Murle tradition of abducting children is related to infertility problems within the tribe, but it has not been possible to explore this more thoroughly in work to redress such incidents. It should also be noted that UNICEF work concerning the Murle is organized from Malakal, for practical and logistical reasons, rather than Juba.

³¹ “Report of Investigation: No 36, Fighting in the Shilluk Kingdom and Killing of Civilians” April 11 2004, Civilian Protection Monitoring Team.

³² Some forces are referred to as “SSDF-“ followed by the name of main town or village. Some of the key individual leaders include: Simon Gatwic, Gordon Kong Chuol, Paulino Matib and Gabriel Tanginya. An important leader, Lam Akol, rejoined the SPLM in October 2003, but dissenting members of his SPLA-United forces are still active in Shilluk Kingdom.

Interviews with unaccompanied boys who have arrived recently from refugee camps highlighted the complexity of working with CAFF. More than 200 unaccompanied children, mostly Nuer who are originally from villages near Nasir or Ayod, have arrived in small groups since mid-January due to attacks on their refugee camps in Ethiopia. Some sources in Malakal believe some of the boys were formerly with the SPLA, but they reported that the boys themselves have not indicated such experience. Our interviews with a few of the boys found it unlikely that they were former child soldiers. Regardless of whether the boys had formerly been with the SPLA, this provides an important example of how child protection programming needs to respond to the multi-faceted ways children will be reintegrating into communities throughout Southern Sudan.

Wau

The main militia in Wau is the 'Peace Army', 'Peace Defense Forces' or 'Fertit Forces'. While the Peace Defense Force name and Muslim religious orientation of the Fertit tribe may create confusion with the PDF para-military force described above, the Fertit Forces have been a long-standing, community-based militia. Many Fertit are displaced from more rural areas to Wau town and its environs.

As with other militia, sources consistently report that boys, but not girls are recruited into the Fertit Militia. Given the deep-seated community defense nature of the Fertit Militia, many boys join 'voluntarily'. However, discontent with the young ages at which children are recruited was expressed openly in focus group discussions with women. Further, the women interviewed associate the use of children as being so common and wide-spread that they make very little distinction between recruitment by the Army, PDF or Fertit Forces.

Fertit commanders and military sources interviewed for our situation analysis denied the involvement of children but acknowledge their obligation to follow national law to not involve children less than 18 years of age. On the other hand, some recognition of the involvement of children might be deduced from reports the commander's gave of wanting to have literacy classes for their youth as the 'Peace Forces' role evolves in the peace process. Discussions with community groups indicated that many youth have been informally released since the cease-fire.

Regarding the Army in particular, many interviews reported instances where the Army or PDF took groups of boys from schools for 'national service' training and subsequently sent them to the front lines. In the more recent year as the cease-fire has held in the Wau area, focus groups discussions with children report that those recruited are those who have lost one or both parents such that the extended family can not meet everyone's needs.

Wau remains especially devastated from the conflict and its related impacts. In particular, the massive famine during the late 1990's is prominent in community memories and descriptions of their experiences during the conflict. While there was direct fighting in Wau town between Fertit and Dinka forces, there currently are residents and displaced communities of both tribes. For example, we were able to meet with a group of unaccompanied Dinka boys, being supported through various means to attend English language schooling, some of whom had fled to Wau to avoid recruitment by the SPLA. In fact, of the places visited for this situation analysis, Wau demonstrated the most evidence of the relative peace since the cease-fire agreement between the GoS and the SPLM/A. For example, all armed groups and officials openly reported that they are planning for, and beginning to take steps towards, the pull-out of the Army and 'changing roles' for other groups and officials once the peace agreement is signed.

In addition to the Fertit Forces, other militia in the Wau area include two or three anti-SPLA Dinka groups of different clans. The most well-known group is known by the name of their leader, Abd Elbagi Ayii, or as the 'Gogrial' militia. Sources report that these militia have an

inconsistent association to the GoS, but that they ‘were given a place’ near an IDP camp North of Wau. Bahr el Ghazal State also features the Baggara tribal fighters involved in abductions of children and previous association with the PDF in guarding Army supply trains. These features point to important tribal fighting traditions that need to be considered as part of the community context for reintegration.

3. Estimating the number of CAFF

Estimates provided during this situation analysis included a consensus among many actors in Bentiu that 3,000 – 4,000 children are involved in SSIM and SSUM. A local committee of authorities, civil society and representatives of the militia in Terekeka estimate 2,000 children in the Mundari Militia. In interviews in Malakal, it was suggested that one make an extrapolation from school drop out data. In one case they suggested an example whereby 50% of the 2,100 registered for ‘Primary 1’ level in a particular locality, would end up, over the subsequent years, becoming involved in fighting forces. In Wau, it was reported that Fertit Forces were approximately 6,000 in total and that they involve “many children”, but no particular estimates were made available. Also in Wau, sources reported conservative estimate that “several hundred” of the 8,000 Army forces stationed around Wau are children, including ‘*jenajesh*’ but not factoring in the role of girls as ‘illegal wives’. Clearly the figure of 10,000 CAFF is conservative, but this situation analysis supports it as a reasonable planning figure for the next 18 months to two years as demobilization and reintegration work with CAFF develops.

In reality, it is, and will be, impossible to determine the number of CAFF with any precision for a number of reasons: the complexity of the issue, official denial, two decade timeframe of the conflict and use of children, ongoing recruitment and difficulties in arranging meetings with certain militia commanders due to ongoing conflict and tensions. Further, many children are escaping or being released informally. The denial of the recruitment and use of children will particularly obstruct efforts to estimate girls and boys used in more domestic or support functions or for sexual relations. The affiliation of these children requires that their rights and needs be met as well as boys affiliated in more active roles as fighters.

This situation analysis concludes that more precise figures on the number of CAFF should not be pursued as an activity in the near term. During this situation analysis, a number of local officials and others expressed the need to first conduct a survey to determine the number of CAFF or to first establish a list or database on CAFF before moving forward with other plans and programmes. To the contrary, as elaborated in section 5, it is strongly recommended that work on CAFF proceed quickly to seize opportunities where armed groups are ready to release children and to a prepare community-based reintegration programme where the rights and recovery needs of all CAFF and other vulnerable children can be supported.

Regarding a database more generally, it will be useful to establish and maintain a programme database to document and monitor information on reaching CAFF and other vulnerable children. This will further be important in addressing identity and other documentation needs of CAFF as elaborated in section 5 below.

4. Opportunities and constraints to demobilize CAFF

As presented above, a central objective of this situation analysis was to identify where and how work to gain the release and reintegration of CAFF might begin. The results point to both important opportunities and significant obstacles.

Opportunities

Multiple opportunities were identified and, further, they are important to seize in the immediate term. Opportunities include expansion of policy and programme preparation work as well as some locales where direct work to release and reintegrate children can begin. In particular, direct work to release and reintegrate children should commence as quickly as possible with the Mundari Militia. This opportunity and other areas where reintegration programming can begin are elaborated in section 5 as part of more specific programme recommendations.

As a summary, important opportunities exist throughout the South as well as continuing the policy and programme framework efforts in Khartoum:

- In many areas, the conflict has receded such that it is conducive to expanding work to demobilize and reintegrate CAFF. The cessation of hostilities agreement has led to a decrease in fighting in some areas and informal release of children – particularly in the areas furthest South around Juba and Wau.
- At the more political level, Army and militia commanders committed themselves to collaborating with HAC and UNICEF within the frame of the emerging peace process. While denial about the presence of CAFF is an obstacle to demobilization, acknowledgement by the Armed Forces and affiliated fighting forces of the applicability of the 18 year minimum recruitment age provides a starting point for follow up.
- Humanitarian Affairs, Education and Social Welfare Ministry representatives at the State level, NGOs, and community leaders confirmed the widespread involvement of children in armed groups and openly expressed interest in expanding work on CAFF. Indeed, viable government and NGO partners exist, although they have relative strengths and weaknesses and differ by location. Thus capacity building activities through orientation and training workshops should be expanded to field level.
- At the community level, civil society representatives and adolescents themselves spoke passionately about their experiences, concerns and desire for reintegration opportunities.
- In field discussions, concerns were often raised about the situation of other vulnerable children, especially children without primary caregivers, street children, and the absence of education. This confirms the ‘inclusive programming’ principle adopted in the Concept Note and creates opportunities to begin programme partnerships that will be ready to receive CAFF when demobilization can expand more formally. In particular, there are major challenges to address in meeting the extensive desire and need for education of all war-affected children. Effective reintegration programming would greatly benefit from progress in the near term on issues such as the payment and availability of teachers, curriculum and supplies and the development of non-formal, accelerated or alternative education modalities.

Constraints and Cautions

While the opportunities identified are encouraging, significant constraints remain. Clearly, the ongoing fighting and recruitment of children in the Greater Upper Nile region (Bentiu and Malakal offices) renders demobilization almost impossible and calls for more strategic prevention and child rights advocacy. More broadly, some of the most important constraints remain at the policy and political level.

1. Denial. As noted, military authorities consistently deny the presence of any children to be demobilized. It was clear throughout the situation analysis that formal instructions are needed from the Ministry of Defense before the Armed Forces and militia can or will cooperate, at the more practical, field level, to commence work with CAFF. This should be sought ahead of, and in conjunction with, any provisions that may be forthcoming as

part of the anticipated peace agreement. This should be a priority advocacy and policy activity in the coming months at the Khartoum level.

Work to release girls and '*jenajesh*' with the Army and CAFF with the PDF will be especially difficult. In regards to the Sudanese Armed Forces, where some officials allow that some children may have been involved as exceptional cases due to shortcomings in the national service mechanism, any involvement of boys as '*jenajesh*' or girls is described as "providing a safe haven for children who have lost parents". As has been noted, girls are often simply 'let go' when they become pregnant or may no longer be desired for other reasons. This will likely continue and will likely be the treatment of '*jenajesh*' as soldiers move to the North as part of redeployment and force reduction. Accessing the PDF towards gaining the release of children will be dependant on the intervention of government leaders. In addition, the dynamics of the relationship between government DDR partners and the PDF may be another layer of difficulty to overcome. This underscores the need for reintegration programmes to be inclusive and community-based so that children can be reached regardless of how they are released.

2. HAC as the government counterpart for DDR. While the collaboration with HAC is important and contributed greatly to the results of this rapid situation analysis, there are risks in having HAC as the government interlocutor for work on CAFF. Child protection actors need to bear in mind that the Ministries with line responsibilities for CAFF are Defense -- on the 'disarmament and demobilization' side -- and State level Ministries of Social Welfare, Education and Health on the 'reintegration' side. Priorities for capacity building are highest for these State-level Ministries most directly responsible for the reintegration process. While cooperation should continue, investments, such as financial support to the various committee structures, systems and other requests should be kept to a minimum. Caution was also raised during this analysis regarding local perceptions of HAC Khartoum and how that may impact negatively on UNICEF and other child protection organizations. Most specifically in Wau, we were advised that HAC Khartoum is regarded with suspicion.

As such, efforts need to be made to engage more directly with the Ministry of Defense and other key actors. Some form of formal 'instruction' is needed from the Ministry of Defense to move forward with demobilization. Doubts were raised during this analysis as to whether HAC has the necessary contacts and influence to achieve this instruction. Expanded advocacy interventions are also necessary with the military intelligence desks that oversee the militia and influence that might be gained through bodies such as the SSCC.

3. Dynamics with the peace process. The lack of clarity as to the plans of the government towards affiliated militia or 'friendly forces' presents a constraint for the whole environment of work on CAFF. The conferring of Army ranks to militia commanders in the past year has in some cases expanded child recruitment. Prospects of the peace agreement are causing some groups to re-define their roles and consider more civilian functions. The PDF and Fertit Forces in Wau stated this explicitly. This will be a challenge to ensuring that work with CAFF genuinely transitions to the civilian realm. The re-definition of roles is also influenced by the overlap of political and military functions; for example, militia commanders that have been appointed as Governors, Commissioners and other civil-political roles. These dynamics may hinder work on CAFF in that civil and political officials may add to the denial of military authorities that any CAFF exist to be demobilized.

The dynamics of the peace process also contribute to expectations that will be unfulfilled as the reality of the peace process and transition evolves. Many of our interviews

expressed high expectations that the role of the militia will be clear in the peace process; including that “when peace comes”, militia will “release children immediately” because there will be “rules and provisions differentiating the [realms of] military and civilian community”. There are high expectations that, “when peace comes”, inaccessible areas will be reached with basic services and that this will facilitate the absorption capacity for former child soldiers. The extension of basic services is indeed a crucial factor for the programming context for CAFF and other vulnerable children, but caution is noted as expectations will likely be much higher than what can be achieved in the coming months.

4. A hidden demobilization. Related to the dynamics with the peace process above, Army and military intelligence anticipate force reduction. Sources indicated that in some locales, the Armed Forces are already releasing disabled and ‘uneducated’ or ‘least important’ soldiers in a manner that involves judicial dismissals without certification of service. Coupled with ‘denial’, there is a risk that the Armed Forces, and some Militia, will release underage members in a manner aimed to avoid acknowledging their existence. This makes it all the more vital to emphasize community-based, inclusive reintegration programming regardless of how formal DDR may proceed.

Part II – Recommendations on next steps to UNICEF

5. The Way Forward – Start with Reintegration

This situation analysis concluded that the UNICEF Country Office in Khartoum should seek the funds necessary to expand work to gain the release and reintegration of CAFF. This will require dedicated international staff at the Khartoum level and recruiting both international and national staff at the field level for the coming period of two to three years.

It is important to highlight that this field-based situation analysis confirmed key reintegration principles adopted in the Concept Note:

- **Inclusive approach:** Reintegration activities will not privilege child soldiers over other vulnerable children (e.g. abducted children, separated IDP and refugee children, or street children).
- **Community-focused support:** Mobilization, training and support will be directed towards communities to strengthen their capacity to receive all returning and vulnerable children. In particular, children will not receive individual packages as the focus will be on community-level inputs for schooling, skills training, and other activities or services.
- **Adaptation to local context:** While taking place within a national framework and with national coordination, the removal and reintegration of children from fighting forces will respond to local opportunities and realities.

Key interventions for UNICEF in taking this forward, as elaborated in this section, are:

1. Lead advocacy and policy development work at the Khartoum level and within the emerging peace process provisions.
This will include developing, with a variety of partners, and leading an advocacy action plan to achieve the necessary policy statements and instructions needed to achieve the demobilization of children. In addition, UNICEF leadership will continue to be important in the multi-party, inter-agency efforts to establish more formal DDR provisions as part of the peace process and North – South harmonization.

2. Initiate reintegration programming in selected field locations as well as lead efforts to ensure appropriate programme preparations are underway for:
 - a. coordination and partnerships,
 - b. family tracing and appropriate reception and care arrangements, and,
 - c. the development of appropriate life-skill and education modalities.

Initiating direct reintegration programming should prioritize Juba – Terekeka and Wau. However, other locales should continue to be engaged in orientation and capacity building workshops and planning, including resources, should be prepared to seize opportunities that may arise.

1. Advocacy and Policy Development

UNICEF is already working on CAFF advocacy, policy and programme planning in anticipation of formal DDR within the context of the peace process and the Technical Task Force with HAC. Coordination between UNICEF and colleagues and partners in the Southern sector to ensure cohesion for CAFF work with the SPLM has been commendable.

However, this will increasingly require the attention of a full time international staff member; recruiting such a staff member will also be essential to the expanding coordination and technical assistance roles of UNICEF. Child protection staff in Khartoum will be increasingly involved in discussions related to the negotiations in Naivasha on security arrangements and dialogue with the UN Department of Peacekeeping regarding a forthcoming observer mission and DDR.

While work within the context of the peace process is ongoing, advocacy at the Khartoum and field level also needs to be expanded. At the Khartoum level, there is a need to develop an approach to, and pursue specific meetings with higher levels of Military Intelligence and Ministry of Defense. It was clear from this situation analysis that UNICEF can play an important facilitation and bridging role between Khartoum and more local officials and leaders. For example, in discussing how child recruitment might be addressed, a number of sources in Bentiu emphasized that local leaders and chiefs can access local commanders, “as brothers and uncles”, but that they need a more dynamic partnership with UNICEF to advocate with higher level commanders and the hierarchy of the government and Armed Forces.³³ They suggested that if policy and instructions were clearly issued against child recruitment, they could help prepare lists of children recruited and approach individual commanders for the release of these children. Throughout this situation analysis, local officials and leaders asked that UNICEF and international partners “keep working on this problem [child recruitment] until we succeed.”

As noted earlier in this report, progress on CAFF requires a high-level government statement confirming that no-one under 18 years of age should be engaged in any form of military service and that this applies to affiliated forces. The statement should also request cooperation with HAC, UNICEF and other counter-parts in releasing children – both now and as the formal DDR process gets established. However, it should be noted that in some locations sources reported that Army commanders have limited influence over militia. In Bentiu, sources explained that even senior officers avoid confrontation and approach militia leaders in an appealing manner rather than relating to them as a hierarchy.

³³ This view was expressed by a regional assembly person and a number of sources who had experience with the demobilization of child soldiers via a Save the Children Sweden (Radda Barnen) project in 1996 centered in Luer. (This was a demobilization of those under 15 years old and was managed from their South Sudan programme.) They expressed as a ‘lesson learned’ from the 1996 experience that it was important to reach parties at all levels with advocacy. Many staff involved in the 1996 project had been teachers and thus respected community members. They could approach individual commanders involved in recruitment at the local level, but an ‘instruction’, negotiated by international actors, that was sent down from the highest level of SSIM, the main party in question, was crucial.

While continuing the collaboration with HAC, it is recommended that UNICEF initiate an informal working group to strategize and develop an advocacy action plan. The advocacy action plan should identify a series of meetings that, together, can increase the level of influence on CAFF more widely in the government. The advocacy action plan, and UNICEF leadership, should harmonize and consolidate a currently diverse set of opportunities:

1. Pursue the statement or instruction needed from the Ministry of Defense to remind all groups of their obligation to release/demobilize everyone less than 18 years and to ask their collaboration with UNICEF, HAC, ICRC, State Ministries, etc.
2. Undertake a risk and opportunities analysis and mapping exercise to identify 'who to talk to and how to approach them'. In other words, different contacts and lines of authority will have differing lines of control or influence over the various armed forces.
3. Participate, facilitate and contribute to the efforts of various actors regarding the Optional Protocol. The Optional Protocol has been recommended for ratification by the Council of Ministers and a number of individuals and organizations have been active in advocating that the Legislative Assembly take up the matter.³⁴ Work on the Optional Protocol is an important part of prevention work for the future and should be complemented with advocacy to ensure that policies, legislation, military instructions and mechanisms – for both proof of age and redress of cases of abuse -- are clarified and applied regarding the legal age for national service and recruitment or participation in any form of armed group. This work should also seek to de-link 'national service' from secondary school enrolment and address the 'loopholes' allowing for PDF training from 17 years and forms of training that are claimed to be of a social, religious and voluntary rather than military nature.
4. Identify and compile relevant legal documents and military policies. A package of such documentation, in Arabic and English, needs to be compiled as part of preparing for advocacy and policy work as well as improving support to local efforts. No written copies seem to be available of current law regarding national service and PDF training. More detailed legal and policy texts will also have to be researched and compiled towards provisions that help to address the issues of 'jenajesh' and 'illegal wives' towards achieving their release. Such a package should also include copies of the CRC, African Union, Optional Protocol, 2000 Secretary General report to the Security Council on DDR and other relevant international references.
5. UNICEF communications section and Save the Children Sweden (with another local NGO) have been involved in various training initiatives with the military. ICRC dissemination staff have established a number of important military, legal and other contacts. These, and other initiatives, should be tapped to identify contacts and entry points and should be streamlined to ensure coherence of strategies and interventions.
6. Related to the legal documents above, this situation analysis identified a need to determine children's identity and documentation needs. While seeking to avoid the implication that 'demobilization orders' are a document 'entitling' one to individual assistance packages or special programmes, some form of document will be necessary to confirm the 'release' or 'de-registration' of the child, document his civil status and facilitate school registration³⁵. It should be re-called that this also helps prevent re-recruitment.³⁶

³⁴ Note that UNICEF was not involved in a recent meeting organized between Members of Parliament, Save the Children Sweden, a representative of the military, and others.

³⁵ For example, in Terekaka, it was widely acknowledged that the Commissioner had made a number of statements prohibiting the recruitment of those under 18 years and age and that as a matter of policy they should be released and go to school. However, it was pointed out that the Commissioner had never gathered the various militia commanders and issued this prohibition as an order. Children themselves reported that they would need to be "de-registered" in order to be released and go to school.

³⁶ In Bentiu, the example was given that a certificate from General Matib was considered equivalent to having done national service and such certificate holders could go to higher education in Khartoum.

7. Other opportunities and issues to pursue include the provision in the 2002 Nuba Mountains Cease-Fire Agreement to stop the use of child soldiers.³⁷ As part of researching the impact and any follow up on this provision, interviews with the Joint Military Commission (JMC)³⁸ may identify important Ministry of Defense contacts.

Advocacy meetings and efforts should also be extended with militia leaders in Khartoum, within the SSCC or other fora.³⁹ For example, one militia leader issued a written instruction prohibiting the recruitment of humanitarian staff in Bentiu. Some militia leaders have made previous commitments regarding child recruitment, may have been involved in previous demobilization efforts in alignment with the SPLA and some have even been part of previous local child demobilization exercises with organizations such as Save the Children Sweden. The statement already made by the Terekeka Commissioner should also be leveraged to influence others.

At the field level, many UNICEF staff in sub-offices are already engaged in working groups or task forces discussing CAFF and other child protection issues. As part of extending orientation and training workshops to the field level, time should be devoted to advocacy strategy and follow up steps. This is another area where UNICEF can play an important bridging and facilitation role. Throughout this situation analysis, local officials, leaders and chiefs requested copies of existing laws and policies so that they might use them in local advocacy efforts “to prove” that children should not be recruited or involved in armed groups. As noted above, the dissemination of existing Sudan law, policies of the Armed Forces and legislative processes such as on the Optional Protocol would facilitate local prevention and advocacy efforts.

2. Initiate community-based reintegration programming

Reintegration programmes developed now will benefit CAFF that are already present or returning to their communities, provide alternatives to ongoing recruitment, and start to build the substantial reception capacity needed for larger numbers of demobilized and returning children in the coming months and years. UNICEF work to start reintegration programming involves both a) extending the national framework adopted in the Concept Note, and b) seizing immediate opportunities such as with the Mundari Militia.

A. Key interventions to advance the national programme framework⁴⁰

Coordination and partnerships

As described above, UNICEF leadership in coordination and facilitating partnerships is also an essential step at the local level. For example, Bentiu already has a ‘task force’ involving UNICEF, local officials from HAC, Social Affairs and Education, and the local leader of the

³⁷ Article II, 3. “[...] entails the cessation of [...]” d. “[...] use of child soldiers, sexual violence, [...]”.

³⁸ The JMC is established by the 2002 “Nuba Mountains Cease-Fire Agreement” and comprises international monitors and representatives of the SAF and SPLA.

³⁹ Some caution should be noted on the SSCC. Some sources for this analysis felt the SSCC is really unknown, even “something to appease a political agenda”. For example, in Juba, the behavior of a previous SSDF deployment left many with distrust and distaste for the SSCC. However, this is not a consistent point of view. For example again in the Juba area, the Mundari and EDF leadership has been considered pivotal to the SSCC in the recent past.

⁴⁰ It should be re-emphasized here that UNICEF has also engaged two consultants to prepare more specific work on identifying potential partners and capacity building needs, developing training modules and initial plans for education and life-skills programming, and developing specific guidelines on issues such as community-based reintegration and appropriate care of separated children. These reports and documents will be available separately from UNICEF Khartoum.

Sudan Red Crescent. The ‘task force’ in Bentiu is primarily a discussion and consultation group due to the tense security situation, but the solid relationships in Juba, Malakal and Wau allow for the establishment of more formal working groups.

Due to the need to strengthen leadership, coordination and partnership work, this rapid situation analysis strongly recommends that UNICEF recruit a national child protection assistant in each of the Southern sub-offices. Local analysis and input is essential in determining which advocacy actions are feasible given the evolving political and security situations and which governmental and civil society partnerships are the most appropriate and feasible. For example, among the cautions of this report, it is noted that State-level Ministries of Social Affairs are the more appropriate partner as compared to HAC, or, perhaps in some locations, the local Education counter-parts may be more appropriate. Further, it takes time to assess, determine the capacity and develop project plans and agreements with NGOs and civil society organizations that may be local partners in a variety of education activities, family reunification, other social support functions, and life-skill activities. Such organizations in turn then need time to recruit and train appropriate staff before activities can be fully in place for direct work with children.

Family tracing, databases and care arrangements

UNICEF has already engaged a consultant to identify gaps in family tracing work and to initiate partnerships and systems. This is an important intervention area for UNICEF to fulfill. ICRC will take the lead on family tracing for CAFF and has committed to mobilizing the resources necessary to assure this nationally. However, complementary, vital roles for UNICEF remain:

- Leadership and technical assistance in establishing policy, guidelines, codes of conduct, ensuring systems and coordination mechanisms are in place, and other issues relating to the care and reintegration of CAFF, separated and other vulnerable children.
- A database on CAFF, with flexibility to include other vulnerable children as part of inclusive reintegration programming, needs to be established and managed for monitoring and reporting needs in addition to the child’s tracing status.
- Further work is needed to identify and establish partnerships for the more social work aspects of work with CAFF. This work will include: active tracing, alternative care, follow-up, family and community mediation and facilitation of linkages for education and life-skills opportunities. Possibilities to pursue include churches -- such as the more than 150-person catechist team mentioned in Terekeka.

The database and social work partnerships should involve the State level Ministry of Social Welfare in view of their legal mandate on separated children and that they are the most appropriate government partner in terms of policy and the programme framework for vulnerable children. This partnership should be arranged and supported in a decentralized manner through UNICEF sub-offices. Further, a number of Social Welfare offices have trained, experienced social workers who could contribute to programme capacity and sustainability. However, the evolving political landscape needs to be heeded during this North-South transition process and the State Ministries have insufficient capacity to manage the scope of work entailed, especially in more technical areas such as tracing and the database. As such, UNICEF should initiate the database with a longer term hand-over plan and should facilitate civil society partnerships.

Developing and facilitating life-skill and education modalities

This is an immense area of work and one which requires further analysis and discussion as to prioritizing which interventions UNICEF undertakes. Again, it should be noted that UNICEF has already engaged a consultant to identify appropriate reintegration strategies and develop initial training modules for the capacity building of partners. While orientation, training and other such workshops require ongoing work, consensus around a framework of appropriate

strategies and activities (in addition to family reunification and appropriate care) has emerged from the work of the combined UNICEF consultancies and the Concept Note.

➤ Some form of education opportunity

Education was consistently requested as the priority activity for reintegration throughout this situation analysis, including by children themselves. This was true across age groups, even where one might expect recommendations to be different for older children, for example those 16 and 17 years of age.

Yet, in reality, throughout Southern Sudan, many areas have never had access to education and most children are years, even decades behind in schooling. While linked, formal education needs are too extensive to be addressed by a CAFF programme. Issues include payment and availability of teachers, curriculum content and supplies, highly politicized language issues, physical facility capacity and the pre-disposition of some stakeholders to boarding schools.

The need for non-formal, compressed or alternative modalities encounters the same issues but is recommended as a priority intervention area for UNICEF work on CAFF. Experience globally has learned that families and children want schooling to be considered equal and recognized as formal. Many areas of Sudan will have the advantage of widespread community interest.⁴¹ Interviews throughout this analysis consistently expressed a desire for education to be accessible regardless of age. Such can be framed as part of the 'Education for All'⁴² goals and commitments but adapted to the level and life circumstances of CAFF, especially where enhancing access for girls can be integrated. UNICEF's work on education through the Child Friendly Community Initiative provides an advantageous baseline and network.

In some areas, especially where there has historically been little or no access to education, such as Terekeka, ensuring access for CAFF and other vulnerable children should consider a programme of education through para-professional teachers and openness to scheduling 'shifts' for classes at different levels and according to different needs as to the time of day for schooling. Other, less formal education modalities might include literacy and numeracy classes run by women's groups or youth centres.

While supporting education opportunities should be a priority intervention area for UNICEF, education opportunities will be slow to be established in many areas due to the immensity of the work to be done. Further, this rapid situation analysis was able to interview very few children who are currently with fighting forces, but indications emerged that education will not be the priority need or choice of some CAFF. One focus group with adolescents reported that some of their peers remaining with armed groups will not be interested in education or other community skills-building activities "because they have become too used to easy money". In terms of recommendations, this underscores the importance of establishing community-based social resources that can intervene, mediate and network between children and a variety of education and life-skills programmes.

⁴¹ For example, in the Juba – Terekeka area, sources noted that one of the reasons the community has developed a strong desire for education, with a tendency to English language education, was due to a negative experience with religious-based Arabic-language education programmes. For example, they noted that previous 'Al Bir' school programmes, implemented with Saudi funding, "only taught the 'Qur'an'" rather than basic reading and writing skills. As cross-line communications have expanded over the last year, local communities have learned that those in refugee camps and some SPLA areas have had access to education --"even learning computers".

⁴² "Education for All", a Millennium Development Goal, calls for free primary schooling.

➤ Livelihood, life-skills and other skill building

Most discussion and investigation regarding ‘skill building’ has focused on potential vocational training activities. While this will be appropriate for small groups of CAFF and other vulnerable children, this situation analysis determined that reintegration strategies need to be more family-livelihood based and adapted to the geographically disperse, agro-pastoral context. A number of Household Economy Assessments have been done by colleagues in the South. These should be consulted as part of further analysis into the range of activities and implementation modalities for CAFF and their communities. Useful linkages have been initiated with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) for extensions of their work to CAFF and vulnerable youth, but a larger scale and scope of activities will be needed.

It remains unclear where UNICEF is best-placed to play a role in livelihood and skills-building activities. Certainly the needs in this area should continue to feature as part of the DDR programme framework of which UNICEF has an important leadership, coordination and advocacy role.

Within the scope of skill building work, greater attention is required to life-skills and it is recommended that UNICEF consider this direction as a key intervention area. A framework of life-skill sessions and their content could be led by UNICEF for integration by a variety of actors and into a variety of education and other settings. For example, integrating such content into para-professional education and women’s groups or youth centres noted above for less formal education modalities. In addition to traditional content for literacy and numeracy, key life-skills areas to include are:

- HIV and other adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues, and,
- Social and cultural activities – including recreation, dance, drama and peer group or child-to-child approaches – that support local conflict resolution and reconciliation issues.

In view of the more in-depth work needed in these livelihood, life-skills and skill-building areas, it is recommended that UNICEF support a few focused, technical consultancies over the next 6 month period. A technical consultancy to focus on analyzing and developing appropriate content for life-skills will need to link closely with the work of education staff and consultants working on curriculum, teacher training and other education issues.

➤ The question of psycho-social activities

The need for social and cultural activities noted above raises the question of psycho-social activities. Indeed, throughout this situation analysis, concern was expressed that all children and young adults have “learned only violence”, “see nothing except carrying guns” over the last two decades. Being part of an armed group is seen as gaining social status. A number of local officials and other sources expressed concern that post-conflict assistance “only looks at infrastructure” but that the social fabric aspects are just as important. As expressed in a workshop in Malakal: “we are counter-acting 20 years of propaganda and militarization”.

Yet, even where sources expressed concern for the ‘traumatic’ experiences of CAFF, they proposed responses focused on the re-establishment of basic services, food security and appropriate care arrangements rather than what some would assume to be a need for psychologically oriented special projects. In some areas, cultural traditions may be appropriate or modified to facilitate reintegration, acceptance, the assuming of civilian

roles by youth. However, in a discussion about this in Bentiu, it was noted that even if limited practices, ceremonies could be adapted, they would be questioned because they will “be seen as a ceremony for a loss of power” in contrast to traditional ‘warrior’ values. Recalling the principle of ‘locally adapted’, this will need to be explored and supported locally rather than models of such ceremonies adopted as part of an overall CAFF programme.

Clearly these reintegration strategies and activities build on the agreed principles of community-based and locally-adapted CAFF programming. Many sources stressed that effective reintegration work must include the extension of basic services to rural areas. UNICEF’s CFCI work provides an advantageous baseline and approach to incorporate into inter-agency coordination and information sharing. Again, in addition to extending health, water and education to rural areas, many stressed that this should include support to livelihood/agro-pastoral interventions for youth.

B. Immediate opportunities to begin work with CAFF

The most immediate CAFF opportunity is with the Mundari Militia based in Terekeka. Indeed this situation analysis would have recommended Terekeka as a pilot project for DDR if the more formal ‘disarmament and demobilization’ aspects -- that involve the GoS – were feasible. Other opportunities for small scale programme initiation are present in other locations.

The Mundari Militia

The situation of the Mundari Militia meets a number of important criteria for undertaking direct CAFF demobilization and reintegration work:

- ✓ A number of Mundari commanders are open about their involvement of children, are supportive and interested in releasing children and have requested support in access to education as the priority reintegration activity. Traditional chiefs openly participated in group interviews at militia posts to urge the release and reintegration of children.
- ✓ A number of steps have been taken, including an April 2003 statement by the Commissioner, to be clear that everyone less than 18 years of age “should be released from the militia and sent to school”⁴³.
- ✓ The Mundari Militia are community-based and within a feasible, geographic pilot area. Terekeka town is accessible by river from Juba during the rainy season.
- ✓ Children themselves want to be ‘de-registered’ and to have the opportunity for education.
- ✓ Most children are already based in their villages and somewhat informally released such that family tracing needs will be minimal, thus maximizing the number of children who can be effectively reached with pilot reintegration activities. The community also remains strong in terms of social cohesion and support structures.
- ✓ There have been some cross-line movements, including of separated children, in Terekeka Territory that will contribute to the degree the pilot experience has linkages with and harmonizes with CAFF work on the SPLM side in the South.⁴⁴
- ✓ A viable civil society partner, the Catholic priest, has already begun highly commendable work to get children released and support their access to education.

⁴³ This ‘instruction’ has otherwise been described as a ‘policy or political statement’ and interviews reveal many versions of its origins and status. Some in Juba reported it was a ‘decree’ by the *wali*, but repeated efforts to get a copy of this decree were unsuccessful.

⁴⁴ Terekeka Territory is not uniformly Mundari and some apprehensions exist about receiving returning Dinka and other populations as the peace process progresses. In a discussion with Father Charles and the local committee working on child soldiers, they expressed concern that returning SPLA cadres will have a ‘superiority complex’ against the Mundari and other groups who “stayed quiet, were ‘arabized’”.

- ✓ The work of this partner has already led to the formation of diverse local committee committed to working on CAFF reintegration. The committee comprises representatives from various sectors including security (military intelligence, militia, and police), education (ministry officials, a headmaster, and teachers) and health. The committee members appear to be of high community standing with access to and good relationships with local commanders and chiefs.
- ✓ The UNICEF sub-office in Juba is well-established and the CFCI initiative is already working, including on education, in a number of Terekeka villages.

However, the phrase ‘pilot demobilization’ is avoided for important reasons. First, the formal disarmament and demobilization aspects are not in place technically or politically. Mechanisms or documents have not yet been agreed with relevant military authorities or at the national level for the official demobilization process. Second, proceeding with a ‘pilot DDR’ will entail an undesirable level of involvement from actors at the Khartoum level.⁴⁵

While not foreseen as an official ‘pilot demobilization’, ‘de-registration’ of children from the Militia is necessary as part of the programme. The Mundari have taken a number of steps to announce that everyone under 18 years old should be released, including an official statement by the Commissioner of Terekeka. Commanders and children explained during our visit that this policy has not been implemented because they need to be ‘de-registered’ from the Militia. ‘De-registering’ the children as part of a ‘demobilization’ and reintegration programme will involve some form of document attesting to the child’s de-registered status. While such a document may not be a ‘demobilization order’, developing an appropriate document should be feasible at the local political level and relevant Mundari command structure.

While facing many challenges, the opportunity in Terekeka Territory will provide an important base of experience in developing and implementing alternative education modalities. In addition to the immediate opportunity with the Mundari, UNICEF CAFF work would be based in the Juba sub-office and will be well-placed to develop CAFF work in Juba-town and the broader Equatoria region. The immediate Juba area is already sensitized to CAFF work from the experience with children who escape the LRA and this aspect of the work will.

Wau and other opportunities

While other militias and locales do not meet the same set of ‘pilot’ criteria above, some are conducive to starting reintegration programming, especially in Wau where the Fertit Forces would be included in such work. A number of CAFF with the Fertit Forces, PDF and other armed groups are already informally released in Wau. Compared to Terekeka, Wau is an environment where CAFF work will more immediately gain experience in a complex peri-urban context and in working with children from different armed groups and other displaced, separated and vulnerable situations. For example, work with girls who have been ‘illegal wives’ will be more extensive in Wau, the Wau area features many displaced populations, and there are a number of Dinka children who fled to the area to escape recruitment. In addition, the UNICEF sub-office in Wau is well-positioned to undertake more specific CAFF work due to good relationships with various political and military authorities,⁴⁶ the establishment of an important ‘advisory group’ of highly-respected traditional leaders and a base-line of CFCI experience.

⁴⁵ As noted earlier in this report, due to a variety of sensitivities, care is needed to limit the Khartoum role to coordination and the overall framework rather than involvement in reintegration programming.

⁴⁶ One such authority includes a military judge that raised the issue of children in the military, including the need to get ‘jenajesh’ released, during a UNICEF annual review and expressed willingness to work on the issue. This opportunity ran into difficulties related to the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children but should be re-opened if possible.

The other location with particular opportunities identified during this rapid situation analysis is Malakal. While not specifically CAFF, the NGO SOS Village, is providing a form of transit camp and one year of education (in English) for some 200 separated children who fled their refugee camps in Ethiopia and have arrived in small groups since mid-January 2004. UNICEF and local authorities are working with SOS Village to ensure the temporary support is appropriate and that longer-term responses and solutions are put in place. Priorities include family tracing, exploring education opportunities that are not linked to the children living in a camp for a year and building education opportunities that are more inclusive of a variety of vulnerable children. Some local sources reported that they believe some of these children were formerly with the SPLA, but interviews with the children and other sources during this rapid situation analysis did not find strong indications that this is true.

Regardless of determining if these 200 separated children may be defined as CAFF, their case combines with other local factors to create an opportunity for small-scale work at the implementation level in addition to policy and advocacy work under the national CAFF programme framework. For example, civil society and many local authorities are openly interested in undertaking more concerted work on CAFF. There are indications that displaced communities and other actors are prepared to undertake the issue of 'jenajesh' and 'illegal wives'; a number of such children involved in the Armed Forces are still located near their families. In addition, some local authorities and civil society organizations have useful experience in working with street children. Thus small-scale reintegration activities that initiate family tracing and alternative education capacity can feasibly be initiated in Malakal and then expanded in scale in the future. This rapid situation analysis supports such a recommendation despite the new fighting in the Shilluk Kingdom which otherwise severely limits broader opportunities in the coming months.

6. Conclusion

As stressed throughout this report, the limited opportunities on the 'demobilization' side should not preclude the critical importance of immediate efforts on 'reintegration side' opportunities and other advocacy and policy actions needed within the frame of the national CAFF programme. In addition to seizing the immediate opportunity with the Mundari, CAFF work – in the form of preparing reintegration capacities and activities – should begin in, and expand out from, feasible locations such as the Juba, Malakal and Wau sub-offices. The anticipation of formal DDR in 2005 makes it all the more crucial that UNICEF raise additional resources in order to implement the results of this rapid situation analysis.

Annex -- Acronyms

CAFF	Children Associated with Fighting Forces
CFCI	Child Friendly Community Initiative
CPMT	Civilian Protection Monitoring Team
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
EDF	Equatorial Defense Forces
GoS	Government of Sudan
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission (GoS Ministry)
JMC	Joint Military Commission (Monitors Nuba Mountains Cease-fire Agreement)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PDF	Popular Defense Forces
RPPB	Rights, Protection and Peace Building Section of UNICEF Khartoum
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SPLM/SPLA	Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army
SRC	Sudan Red Cross and Red Crescent Society
SSCC	South Sudan Coordinating Council
SSDF and SPDF	South Sudan Defense Forces and Sudan People's Democratic Forces under SSCC
SSIM	Southern Sudanese Independence Movement
SSUM	Southern Sudan Unity Movement
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Annex – Highlights from Focus Groups

Juba/Terekeka

Focus group with commander, soldiers and local chief at militia post (12 people)

- Children join because of hunger; but with UNICEF’s help to provide education, no objection to releasing children
- Obstacles to schooling: hunger, fees and uniforms, lack of teachers, materials in local language
- “We are all blind and need education” (the word ‘blind’ used euphemistically); “UNICEF help will be the key to showing the light of going to school”

Focus group with child soldiers at militia post (5 boys aged 10 – 13 years)

- “We are registered with commandos, so even if I go back to my grandfather, the commandos can take me back.”

Interview with 2 women from Women’s Union

- “Our own children are with the commandos. We do not approve but they force children to go and fight. Some children go themselves.”

Malakal

Group interview with 5 boys who are part of a group of unaccompanied children recently returned from refugee camps in Ethiopia. This group of arriving unaccompanied children has sometimes been described as having been child soldiers, so they were interviewed and this provides a summary of their situation.

- The 5 boys, 17 and 18 years old, are the ‘leaders’ for a group of 203 such unaccompanied children. The children have been arriving in small groups of 3 or 4 since mid-January. They say they are doing so on their own decision because of the Anuwak attacks on their refugee camps and because they heard peace is coming in Sudan; so it seemed better to try to go home rather than continue of the uncertain security situation of the camp.
- They report choosing to come directly to Malakal because (as a major town as compared to Nasir or other towns) they expected to find organizations to help them. They spoke openly about knowing UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden from living in the Ethiopian camps and looking for these organizations when arriving in Malakal.
- They all fled to Ethiopia and lived in the camps as unaccompanied children during the 1988 and 1993 period. As examples, 3 of the boys are from villages ranging from 10 to 25 km outside of Nasir, 1 from Nasir town and 1 from Ayod town.
- Some found family members (siblings) in the Ethiopian camps but they report that they did not take advantage of the Red Cross Message opportunity offered in the camp because they did not know if their parents were still alive and thus to what address a letter could be sent.
- As examples of family separation situations now: 3 of the 5 left siblings behind in the camps in Ethiopia; but they were not actually living with these siblings in the camp. One was with a sister in Ethiopia but she married and moved to Kenya. One reported knowing his father was killed and that a sister was left in Ayod but having no other family info.
- They spoke of living in small, self-selected groups of separated children in the camps and that everything was going well (“quiet”) there until around 2000.
- They all reported that, despite wanting education, if there are relatives in their home village, they will go there and help cultivate, fish or “be a charcoal man” if that is the only alternative. But they report being pessimistic as they did not hear anything about family members all these years in Ethiopia.
- Regarding their expectations about various peers all returning to their home village from different displaced, CAFF situations, they reported that they would “first gather and sit

together”, “make ourselves friends”, “learn from each other’s mistakes”, discuss and share ideas, “what works and what does not work” in undertaking different activities towards the future.

Group interview with community leaders of Obeid 1 IDP camp:

- Destruction of the country, hunger and loss of parents has caused children to join. Hunger causes children to look for work with Army and then they join, “learn to become soldiers”.
- Regular displacement, “always moving”, and tribalism also cause children to join armed groups.
- Regarding national service, “government makes policy that secondary school certificate equals compulsory service irrespective of age”.
- Children “go looking” for recruitment, “it is the only place to go”.
- Only boys go for recruitment; girls go to become wives before the “right age”, this is “illegal marriage”.
- “People are fed up with this problem.”
- Girls who have babies return to their parents; “they welcome her back and forgive her” but this “adds to the household problems”.
- “Current Army is not disciplined; just take girls, abuse them and keep them if they are not pregnant.” They “deceive the girls with food and money”; the girls “think this man will be better” and goes with him.
- Whole social system is breaking; boys are eloping with girls.
- In anticipating peace, plan to go home to localities as long as there is food; other first priorities will be a community health center and education. Will need “free education” and peace education “to brainwash children into a new, civilian orientation”.

Group interviews with IDP youth in Obeid 1: 8 girls and 18 boys

- “Some boys go to the Army if they have no means to stay in school”; “some boys go to relatives on SPLA side hoping to find education.”
- 5 boys in this group have been able to join the police, even since 12 years old, and receive regular but insufficient income. They report that this counts as military service and that they are thus able to pay irregular school fees for themselves and have food. They report that they want to leave the police “when peace comes”.
- Problem is children that have lost parents and are mistreated by extended family; plus extended family is poor and children have to find their survival.
- Only 1 youth in interview group had both parents, 45% live with only their mother and the rest gave unclear reports of living alone or with fathers or uncles.
- Some families are marrying off girls early for dowry. Girls have to work in the market from 12, 13 years old; they are deceived by the soldiers and “married” 2 and 3 times. “Some end up in the North as servants”. “Before war, tradition was for girls to marry at 25 years”.
- Both girls and boys in the group report that girls are welcomed back by families and can re-marry parents don’t allow “marriage with Army man”.
- “Peace and education will help this problem of under-age marriage”.
- When peace comes and everyone is able to go home, may be some problems with returning SPLA people “feeling like liberators and referring to others as having government mentality”. Some boys who went with Army “went for money and will want to stay”. But “those who went with SPLA were volunteers and those who went with friendly forces were compelled so they will leave easily and want education”.

Wau

Bafra CFCI focus group with women and a few adolescent girls

- Children are sometimes deceived into joining by promises of food, money and clothes

- “They take” even small boys as young as 7, 10, 11 years and even take all of the sons of the same mother
- When extended families are overstretched, poverty automatically means military work as only choice.
- Women believe children “are at their grave” if they join a military group but sometimes have to accept because of poverty.
- Similarly, men leave to look for women without children and then eldest boy automatically has to look for work
- Before war, appropriate roles for young boys (12, 14 years) was to cultivate, to work as builders or carpenters; so giving hoes and other such oriented supports would be most appropriate for reintegration

Note: In some cases the women saw no distinction between the Army and Fertit or Peace Forces; but in most cases, they were referring to the Army.

Gazira CFCI focus group with youth – 11 boys with ‘Uncle Martin’ but many others started joining

- Advantages of joining regular, formal Army: paid properly and this provides for children/other family; have to do this if want education
- Advantages of joining Peace Forces: defend parents; can give parents something back when receive incentives; if group moves, can refuse and stay near family
- Disadvantages of Army: can get killed, lost or loose limbs
- Disadvantages of Peace Forces: if die, no pension and not even a contribution to family for funeral
- Would advise all younger boys not to join any armed groups
- Uncle Martin emphasized that this was an intensely operational area with no freedom of speech or choice; “youth are afraid”

Jebel Khair (local NGO) group discussions

Jebel Khair staff reported that most children ‘sleep’ at home of an extended family member but ‘are on own’ to survive through activities such as: cutting grass, gathering firewood, making charcoal, fishing or hunting. They emphasized that youth have no self-respect or respect from community “if idle” so that they are “forced to look to militia” for lack of alternatives.

One staff member told his personal story of how he was taken as a ‘*jenajesh*’ at 10 years old, joined the Army to be a soldier at 16 years to escape the ill-treatment and then was finally able to leave at 20 years “to be free”. He expressed particular distress about the pattern he witnessed of soldiers taking local girls as girlfriends and that he wants to help the next generation. (On this issue, the Bishop also commented that amongst the many ways children are used by armed groups, “the lucky ones become soldiers”.)

Group of 14 boys, age 11 to 20 years, all living with an uncle or grandparent:

- Advantages of joining military: have salary so can help with younger brothers and sisters.
- Disadvantages: could die, witness horrible things, can’t raise a family.
- If not working, can be collected for service at any age. (Explained that if working in agriculture, one can still get a form of civil servant ID to prevent being taken.)
- All still have a lot of friends and relatives in Army or Fertit Forces.
- Girls are recruited as personal girlfriends by soldiers, know people who recruit girls for this, the girls can get some money and food from this. Girls are also sometimes recruited to do labor for Peace Defense Forces.
- For older youth leaving military groups, they may have to build their own house and need skills as a priority over education. Skill interests were mainly in carpentry, building, welding or trade activities that would be facilitated by having a bicycle.

- Drama ‘helps to keep ones mind’, but expense of education is really a problem. Drawing, skits and certain traditions like dance and story-telling would help “to cope with past and future”, “to have common ideas in the community”. Youth clubs would be good “because they help to think”, could be an information source “for help to make up mind”, “to plan a programme”, “to bring a small idea forward with a trained person”.
- Fear that some peers in Army will be “used to easy money” and will thus not be willing to devote the time and attitude to learning something new, may be attracted to gangs/thieves.
- If peace and education back in country-side, will go back

Meeting with 4 elders

- What children see and have learned over these many years is that a man with a gun has the power to kill or protect; there are so many types of forces and different terms that this vision is the same regardless of which armed force, group or affiliation.
- One elder was forced to do military service in Khartoum some time back and witnessed a group of 75 youth, all sent to the front with hardly any training and all died.
- Parents, community has no power; “what law to retrieve your child even if you know where he is?”; no institutional arrangement of government to approach; if go to a judge one can be arrested; “so many taxes and costs on parents”; children and nephews of even chiefs are taken as young as 8, 10 years old.
- People are traumatized and de-moralized.
- If children can be released they need life-skills, but there is “no market for what one makes”.

Open group interview with 30 Dinka boys at ECS school:

- If peace and can return home (to rural, SPLA held areas), feel their needs will be the same as peers who were recruited – the basic needs of life: food, shelter. “We will help our families with cattle and cultivating.”
The HAC representative for a Dinka IDP community, and who facilitated the ECS interviews, commented that when people can return they need help incorporating new elements to traditional economic activities. He suggested: milking cows (instead of “cows just for pride”), plowing with ox and upgrading fishing and boat techniques.
- People will not treat each other differently; “we will share ideas and avoid hatred”.
- But need to continue education “when we go back”. For those who were recruited, if they are younger than 25 years, it is not too late for them to study. Expressed confidence that girls coming back will be able to marry but for younger girls, there are no schools in rural areas. “Parents don’t let girls come to town for school.”
- Some hesitated about going home if there was peace because there would be no opportunity for post-primary school.
- “Heard rumors” that some peers volunteered to join SPLA, “but expect they are tired and will be happy if UNICEF can help get them released”.

Note: these boys escaped in early 2003, individually or in small groups, to Wau from rural areas during SPLA attacks. For most, the explicit reason was to escape recruitment. Distant relatives and tribal connections helped request ECS school to take them because it was the only option for education in English. (It remained unclear from the various interviews as to how the boys’ school fees are being paid.) With recent, relative peace, some have started going back to their rural homes; there are 280 boys currently out of some 450 total boys originally.

A brief group interview was also held with 13 Dinka girls at ECS school. These girls were from Dinka families in Wau town; girls in rural families are otherwise not allowed to go to town for school. Other youth in Wau reported that children were and are very much recruited from town as well as rural areas, but a different pattern arises for Dinka children. The Dinka girls at ECS school opined that girls that have been recruited will need advice on certain guidelines and ways

of village life: like cooking and making flour.

'Youth group' (10 boys, 1 girl) involved with Unicef Wau. These youth were really more from the 'elite' of the community but they expressed interest in doing more to reach out to their peers. They have committed to do a weekly youth radio programme (in 7 dialects) as part of the Radio Listening Group to diffuse children's rights. They asked for UNICEF's help to reach more rural areas by distributing more listening radios. They commented that more advocacy and rights promotion is needed so that youth "know they don't have to go", be recruited and to reach multiple layers of authorities. They expressed the view that vulnerable children (those who were recruited or are returning from displacement) need basic education ("there should be some schools free of charge") and livelihood help.

Annex – Selected references

Background documents:

- “Eight Grassroots Conflicts in Sudan”, Dr Paul Wani Gore, Dr Abdel Hamid Balla, Dr Muna Mohamed Taha Ayoub, Dr Abbas Shasha Musa, Mr El Tayeb Ibrahim Ahmed Wadi, Mr Osman Mohamed Osman, Mr Musa Adam and Dr Abraham Matoch Dhal, sponsored by UNICEF, March 2004.
- “The South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF): A challenge to the Sudan Peace Process”, Institute for Security Studies Situation Report, 8 April 2004
- “The Sudan IGAD Peace Process: Signposts for the way forward”, Institute for Security Studies Occasional Paper, 13 February 2004.

Draft DDR planning documents:

- “Draft Concept Note: The Government of Sudan Framework for the Formal Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (DDR) and Removal of Children from Fighting Forces in Sudan”, The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), Khartoum, 9 March, 2004.
- “Strategic Outline for Planning DDR in Sudan”, Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, 10 February 2004.

Reports with child recruitment information:

- “Children in Sudan: Slaves, Street Children and Child Soldiers”, September 1995 by Human Rights Watch.
- Commission on Human Rights, Question of The Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in any Part of The World, The situation of human rights in Sudan, E/CN.4/2003/L.35, 11 April 2003.
- Committee on the Rights of the Child, Thirty-First Session, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention, “Concluding Observations: The Sudan”, CRC/C/15/Add.190, 9 October 2002.
- “Final Report of Investigation: Kalakla Area Forced Conscriptations”, 2 December 2003, Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT).
- “Sudan: Empty Promises? Human Rights violations in Government-controlled areas”, Amnesty International, 16 July, 2003, (AFR 54/036/2003).