



Gender Informed Needs Assessment Report

DISCLAIMER:

The report does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of World Vision South Sudan (WVSS). Correctness of the information presented herein is bound to the Gender Assessment outcomes of this report.

Acknowledgement

This publication is reflective of interviews and focused-group discussions during the conduct of the Gender Informed Needs Assessment led by the Q&A Management Consultancy Team and World Vision's FOCUS Project team in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. The report is supported with research from academic journals and the reports of other non-governmental organisations who were referenced in the footnotes. The resources were provided by World Vision's Advocacy and Communications team with further design work provided by World Vision Germany.

World Vision's protection work, including support with former child soldiers in South Sudan is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), UNHCR, CARE, and War Child. We collaborate with Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare, the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization and the National Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration, among others.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CAAFAG - Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

CFS - Child Friendly Spaces

CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child

GBV - Gender Based Violence

NAP - National Action Plan

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

PWD - Persons with Disability

R-ARCSS - Revitalised Agreement on Resolutions of Conflict in South Sudan

TCSS – Transitional Constitution of South Sudan

UN – United Nations

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF – United Nations Children Fund

UNMISS – United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan

UN OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution

WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Table of Contents 1 2

Acknowledgement	3	3 Approach and Methodology	15
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	4	3.1 Approach	15
Executive Summary	7	3.2 Pre-field activities: Inception phase	15
Key findings of the assessment	8	3.3 Data collection: Field phase	15
Recommendations	10	3.3.1 Qualitative methods	15
1 Introduction and Background	12	3.5 Data quality assurance	16
1.1 Introduction	12	3.6 Data analysis and reporting	17
1.2 Background and description of the project	12	3.7 Study limitations	17
2 Purpose and Scope of the Survey	14	4 Key Concepts, Literature and Legal Provisions	18
2.1 Introduction	14	4.1 Definition of key concepts	18
2.2 Main purpose	14	4.2 History of children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAGs)	19
2.3 Specific objectives	14	4.3 Legal provisions related to CAAFAGs	20
2.4 Scope of the study	14		

Table of Contents 1 2

5	Key Findings and Analysis	26		
	5.1 Introduction	26		
	5.1.1 Contextual analysis	26		
	5.1.2 Gender roles and responsibilities	27		
	5.1.3 Access and control over resources	30		
	5.2 Enrolment and life of CAAFAGs in the armed group	35		
	5.2.1 Living conditions	35		
	5.2.2 Experiences and punishments for CAAFAGs during captivity	36		
	5.2.3 Drug use and abuse	39		
	5.2.4 Atmosphere in the armed conflict	39		
	5.2.5 Departure from the armed groups	40		
			5.2.6 Life after leaving the armed groups' camp	41
			5.2.7 Aspirations of the child: From now on, what do I want to be	42
			5.2.8 Reintegration opportunities for CAAFAGs	43
			5.3 Case studies	46
			5.3.1 Case study one	46
			5.3.2 Case study two	47
			5.3.3 Case study three	49
			6	Lessons Learnt and Recommendations
			6.1 Lessons learnt	51
			6.2 Recommendations	51
			6.3 Conclusion	53

Executive Summary

Every year, thousands of children around the world are recruited into armed groups. In South Sudan, the most recent statistics state that 19,000 children have been recruited or forced to join armed forces or groups¹. Children are at risk of being recruited into armed groups when conflict is ongoing by armed groups and when levels of poverty are significant, two conditions currently confronting many in South Sudan². In this report, the differing roles of children based on their gender is explored in relation to their experiences with armed forces and groups. Additionally, gendered experiences are considered before and after their experiences with armed groups, a reflection of broader social and cultural roles in South Sudan.

While the recruitment and use of children in conflict is prohibited by numerous international and domestic legal instruments, the practice continues in parts of South Sudan. This research was conducted in Yambio County in Western Equatoria State, an area of South Sudan that has seen regular conflict among multiple armed groups since 2016^{3,4}. The area has also witnessed the regular recruitment and use of children by various armed groups. The children participate in conflict in a myriad of ways, including being “used as fighters,

cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes,” as reflective of the Paris Principles⁵.

In Yambio County, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) funds the project Focusing on Children with Unmet Child Protection Needs in South Sudan which is implemented by World Vision South Sudan and the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization. The project works directly with children who were formerly associated with armed groups and forces, along with other vulnerable children, their families, government, community and religious leaders, and other stakeholders. The research was conducted in coordination with the Focusing on Children with Unmet Child Protection Needs in South Sudan project and takes the form of a Gender Analysis/Assessment Survey.

The analysis and assessment investigated the roles girls associated with armed forces and groups play in conflict in the project’s areas in South Sudan, along with their experiences before and after leaving the armed groups. While the study focused on the roles of girls in hostilities, the roles boys play, with specific focus on labour distribution, was also factored into the report.

1 UNICEF. (2019, February 12). More than 3,000 children released from armed groups in South Sudan since conflict began, but thousands more continue to be used.

www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-3000-children-released-armed-groups-south-sudan-conflict-began-thousands-more

2 UN OCHA. (2022). Humanitarian needs overview: South Sudan. reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hno_ssd_2022_26feb2022.pdf

3 Boswell, A. (2021) Special report: Conflict and crisis in South Sudan’s Equatoria State. United States Institute for Peace. www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/sr_493-conflict_and_crisis_in_south_sudans_equatoria.pdf

4 UNMISS & UN OCHA. (2022). Attacks on civilians in Tambura County: June-September 2021. www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Tambura-Report.pdf

5 UNICEF. (2007). The Paris Principles: Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed force or armed groups, p. 7. www.unicef.org/mali/media/1561/file/ParisPrinciples.pdf

The assessment applied a purely qualitative research design utilising Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) tools with children and key adult stakeholders that included:

- Desk research of international and domestic legal documents
- 15 semi-structured interviews with 17 key informants
- 6 focus group discussions with 32 participants
- 3 case studies with children formerly associated with armed forces or groups

Key informant interviews were conducted with government officials from the State Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, and the department of Child Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), along with interviews with community leaders and chiefs, youth leaders, women leaders, religious leaders, parents, boys and girls who formerly participated in armed conflict, World Vision staff and Community Empowerment for Progress Organization staff. The six focus group discussions were conducted with groups separately composed of men, women, both men and women, girls, boys, and both girls and boys groups. Dividing groups by gender ensured that male and female participants had the opportunity to freely express themselves in a context that is culturally sensitive on issues concerning gender. The case studies provide insight from children formerly associated with armed groups or armed forces and illustrated some of their experiences through drawings to reveal different aspects of their lives. Their drawings revealed the situation the children

experienced, in line with the roles and conditions they endured while in the armed groups.

Key findings of the assessment

Through the research process, several key findings were revealed. Prior to becoming part of the armed group or armed forces, the distinct role between genders dictated many of the responsibilities both boys and girls were tasked with. Girls were responsible for household activities, including fetching water, collecting firewood, cleaning, and washing clothes. The gendered distinction between household responsibilities highlights a broader gender divide within South Sudan where women are responsible for household survival while at the same time the control over financial resources and land is frequently withheld from females, in alignment with traditional cultural norms.

Focus group discussions revealed several obstacles that limit girls' and women's participation in the development efforts within their communities. Women are active in the agricultural sector but few controlled the land they cultivate, as land rights are held in clan by men in their families. Meanwhile men are involved in marketing of higher income generating activities such as burning and selling of charcoal, cereal crops, and animal products. Access, ownership, and control of productive resources is held in the hands of men and boys. Men also participate in community meetings and other leadership structures making decisions in development work. Most community development plans are decided in the absence of women. In terms of roles in the community, women and girls remain overburdened by both productive and reproductive roles.

While many children that took part in this research were abducted and forced to join the armed groups or armed forces, some boys and girls chose to join the groups due to poverty and not being enrolled in school. Some children in our research who voluntarily joined stated they no longer wanted to be a burden to their parents who were too poor to afford adequate living conditions. Others mentioned that they left their families because they were not accepted or understood. The decision to join an armed group usually was the result of a long period of conflict with their parents. When parent and child relationships are strained, enrolment meant an escape from parental authority. After their experiences in armed groups or armed forces, these children returned to their homes to confront the same living conditions they escaped from.

When recruited or abducted into armed groups, girls often performed duties that were similar to boys including bearing arms and being actively involved in the conflict and looting, along with being porters, messengers, and spies. Additionally, girls who were part of armed groups frequently described sexual violence and rape, including some instances where girls were forced to 'marry' a leader of an armed group. Numerous girls and women reported becoming pregnant as a result of the sexual violence they faced. Children were controlled to follow commands while in the armed groups by threats of violence and witnessing brutal scenes of punishment of those who disobeyed.

Children commonly used drugs and alcohol while they belonged to armed groups. Some children reported that drugs made them numb to the violence they were ordered to enact, with the drugs or alcohol becoming a coping strategy to persevere in the conditions of the armed groups. The use of

drugs and alcohol contributed, at times, to children feeling content with the atmosphere of life within the armed groups. However, these feelings of contentment were overshadowed by times when people went without food for days, when the children were actively involved in conflict, and when punishment was administered.

To leave the armed groups, many children escaped, running at an opportune moment despite the risk of being caught and facing punishment or being killed by their own armed group for abandoning their role. Children who escaped cited the deep connections they had with their family as a motivating force to leave the armed group and return to their community, along with concern for their survival if they remained in the armed group.

When returning to their homes and communities, children formerly associated with armed groups faced a host of new challenges. Many who escaped stated they were concerned of being re-abducted and re-recruited into armed groups; while others worried they would be called to account for the violence they enacted while in the armed groups. Many arrived back to their homes and faced stigma and discrimination due to their time in the armed groups. At the same time, some who returned faced challenges controlling their emotions and were plagued by nightmares. Youth who left the armed groups frequently faced financial hardship, without the prospect of employment or income, after returning to their community. For some, their return has been marked by addiction, continuing to rely on alcohol and drug use; with petty crimes and sexual violence being committed by some youth who once belonged to armed groups. For some girls and women who return from armed groups, sex work is the only way to survive.

The pregnant and the child bearing women are highly vulnerable in the communities with significant lack of basic support needed in life.

Children formerly associated with armed groups return to their communities with aspirations of rebuilding their lives and being financially stable. For girls and women who return with children that were conceived during their time with armed groups, challenges of providing not only for themselves but for their children are top-of-mind. Organizations help children return to school, by paying for school fees, or by helping children attend vocational training institutions where they can learn a skill to help them earn income in the future. However, not all children formerly associated with armed groups benefit from these interventions. For instance, girls with children require child care to take part in various programmes intended to help them reintegrate into society.

Some children reported that psychosocial support from organisations was critical to help them regain a sense of normalcy as they returned, although concerns were expressed about the infrequency of psychosocial interactions with trained social workers. Additionally, a lack of awareness about issues of gender, HIV, and children's rights was identified as a need for future interventions.

Additional insight from the research process revealed the importance of working collectively with other agencies and the need for reliable, sustained funding to adequately respond to the needs of children formerly associated with armed groups and their communities. Research participants identified the need for future programming to consider how families can

adequately support and strengthen relationships with children who return to their homes. A few tools that were suggested were conflict-management techniques and effective communication strategies.

Recommendations

This report provides multiple recommendations for consideration for future projects that target children associated with armed groups. They include:

- Include parents in protection interventions for the rehabilitation of children associated with armed groups and armed forces
- Enhance protection of children in the communities when they are released, returned to their families and while in Child Transit Centers (CTC)
- Support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes in the state and the targeted counties
- Establish and support child friendly spaces (CFS) in the communities to facilitate psychosocial support, recovery, and rehabilitation of the children
- Support rehabilitation and recovery of children associated with armed groups and armed forces through sports for peace and recovery programmes and projects
- Provide longterm psychosocial support services and counselling services

- Provide children associated with armed groups and armed forces with basic needs such as food, shelters, clothes, medical care, among other urgent items
- Strengthen community leadership structures to manage children associated with armed groups and armed forces in the communities of Yambio County
- Design and implement multisectoral approaches to undertake child disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and counselling in the communities. Strengthen mechanisms to facilitate protection, recovery and rehabilitation
- Establish care homes for children formerly associated with armed groups and armed forces, along with homes designated for girls who became pregnant or mothers during their time with the armed groups
- Increase efforts to harness the Triple Nexus Approach of Humanitarian, Development and Peace to enhance resilience incorporating community approaches and local conflict resolution mechanisms
- Introduce vocational skills training that align with market demands to assist children associated with armed groups and armed forces an opportunity to improve their ability to earn income
- Create awareness about children's and women's rights, gender based violence, gender mainstreaming to enhance women's representation in various decision-making structures, provide psychosocial support and implement prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse policies as well as include strategies for targeting men and boys for GBV and women's rights initiatives
- Conduct joint programmes in which men and women can be sensitised on the provisions of legal frameworks and policies protecting women and girls' rights (R-ARCSS, TCSS 2011 (under review), Gender Policy 2013, UNSCR 1325, NAP, CRC 2013 among others) to enable them to dialogue and agree on strategies for addressing harmful traditional practices that undermine women and children's rights in the community
- Create more awareness in communities to stop child involvement in armed conflict, continuation of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process



1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This section of the report provides an overview of World Vision and its activities in South Sudan specifically while underlining the overall and specific objectives of the Gender Needs Assessment. This section highlights the background of the assessment, description of the project, project background, goals and purpose, and objectives.

1.2 Background and description of the project

A consortium of organisations implements this project: World Vision Germany, World Vision International – South Sudan, and Community Empowerment for Progress Organization. World Vision has been implementing relief, recovery, and development projects in South Sudan since 1989. It operates in eight of the 10 states with food security and livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); education; health; nutrition; protection; and peacebuilding interventions.

Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, established in 2010, is a legally registered national humanitarian and development community organisation with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (Registration Number 859) and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (Registration Number 274) in 2014. Its mission is to strengthen and

promote the capacity and capability of society members on peacebuilding, security reform, a culture of human rights, protection, democratic principles, and livelihood. Community Empowerment for Progress Organization focuses on protection and peacebuilding, education, food security and livelihoods, health, and nutrition.

Most Community Empowerment for Progress Organization programmes are implemented in Yambio (Western Equatoria) and Juba (Central Equatoria). Both organisations have evidence of successful interventions on child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) in Yambio.

World Vision has vast experience working with local civil society organisations. Community Empowerment for Progress Organization has experience in grassroots mobilisation, reaching the most vulnerable. World Vision can strengthen Community Empowerment for Progress Organization's role in project implementation.

Most counties in South Sudan have a significant convergence of water, sanitation and hygiene, protection, and education-related needs. Children and mothers are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of chronic stresses and sudden shocks. They tend to do without most of their essential needs and are subject to pervasive violence and the lasting effects of conflict.

Hence an obstacle for people to begin recovering from the years of conflict and violence.

The essential social services that should help build their potentials to live decent lives and get protection from the impacts of crises are largely inadequate. Only 6.5 percent of at-risk children can access psychosocial support and other child protection services. Children and adolescents further suffer from the inheritance of protracted conflict, which contributes to widespread violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Yambio has recorded cases of sexual violence and recruitment of children by armed forces and groups. Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a reality for girls and women, with child and forced marriage among the most common harmful traditional practices. Only 20 percent of at-risk women and girls have access to services related to GBV⁶. Social norms that endorse gender inequality, tolerance to violence, stigma against survivors, and a lack of respect for girls and women's rights drives GBV. Survivors have little access to support because of stigma, the absence of trained security personnel, and a lack of appropriate medical, legal, or psychosocial services. The lack of a functioning justice system further contributes to the culture of tolerance and impunity.

Improving the well-being of vulnerable and conflict-affected children and adolescents in Yambio is a project goal. In addition, for Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAGs), child survivors of GBV, and other vulnerable groups of children and their families and caregivers, improving access to strengthened child protection services, adequate reintegration measures, and creating a more protective environment are project objectives.

The primary target beneficiaries of the project are conflict-affected vulnerable children and women. The project will work with 2,000 children, including released CAAFAGs and other vulnerable children, who will be provided with comprehensive child protection case management services, including family tracing and reunification, medical check-ups, nutrition screening, education assessment/referral, psychosocial support services, safe referrals, and legal services. The project will also focus on 18,000 women, girls, men, and boys through information and awareness-raising activities about children's rights and child protection interventions. An estimated 21,250 indirect beneficiaries, comprised of women, girls, men, and boys, will be helped with inter-communal and inter-generational conversations. These conversations will focus on preventing children's involvement in the conflict, violations against children, women, and other marginalised groups.



⁶ UN OCHA (2019). Humanitarian needs overview: South Sudan. reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South%20Sudan%20-%20Humanitarian%20needs%20overview%202020.pdf

2. Purpose and Scope of the Survey

2.1 Introduction

This section covers the purpose of the Gender Needs Assessment and the scope of geographic coverage and programmatic outlook, looking at desired outcomes and outputs.

2.2 Main purpose

The study's primary purpose was to understand the roles girls associated with armed forces and groups play in conflicts in the project areas in South Sudan. While the study focused on the roles of girls in hostilities, the roles boys play with a specific focus on labour distribution was also factored.

2.3 Specific objectives

1. To understand the experiences of girls associated with armed forces and armed groups, along with their responsibilities, and their coping mechanisms
2. To draw lessons on rehabilitation and reintegration approaches (safety and care, social reintegration, physical and mental health) based on the specific needs of these girls. Moreover, to implement an integrated particular focus on children born out of conflict or sexual assault

3. To determine the driving factors behind the recruitment of girls into armed forces and groups and understand why girls voluntarily join armed groups
4. To identify areas to enhance project adaptation and guide areas of capacity building for the project team, i.e. as a result of the assessment, gender markers could be applied or a gender-friendly feedback mechanism could be established

2.4 Scope of the study

The study aimed to create a Gender Informed Needs Assessment. This assessment focused on the roles of both girls and boys connected to armed forces or groups. Furthermore, the study intended to draw lessons learned on rehabilitation, understand motivating factors for recruitment, and provide recommendations for project adaptation in the four payams (administrative districts): Yambio Town, Bangasu, Gangura, and Li-Rangu in Yambio County, Western Equatoria.

3. Approach and Methodology

3.1 Approach

The assessment information was collected using a purely qualitative approach, which included focus group discussions and key informants interviews.

Participatory projective techniques enabled maximum participation of the groups examined. Such methods allowed a deeper exploration of participants' knowledge, their needs, and ensured a greater sense of ownership of the study process and any associated future programming.

3.2 Pre-field activities: Inception phase

A comprehensive desk study achieved an understanding of local dynamics to provide a basic context and foundation for data collection and sample design. This study contributed to the development of an inception report, including the data collection tools.

World Vision South Sudan staff in Yambio conducted a meeting to discuss the inception report, including research methodology and tools. This meeting provided a platform to review and submit a revised inception report that World Vision South Sudan approved.

3.3 Data collection: Field phase

Before administering the questionnaire, four enumerators (two female and two male) were trained through a field data collection exercise to ensure that the data collected met World Vision South Sudan requirements. The main objective of the training was to enable the enumerators to understand the data collection methods and tools to ensure quality data collection and provide them with the skills to moderate successful focus group discussions. This training also included information about safeguarding principles and ethical issues in research with young children.

3.3.1 Qualitative methods

Along with a comprehensive desk review, the team also reviewed and analysed project documents, including the project's proposal and log frame. The Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Intervention⁷, Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action⁸, The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergency Programming⁹, Evaluation Community-based Reintegration Programme for Children Released from Armed Forces and Armed Groups in Boma State¹⁰, materials from the Global Coalition for Integration of Child Soldiers¹¹, Reference

7 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2017). The Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action. UN Women. www.gihahandbook.org/#en

8 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2015, August). Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action:

Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery. UN OCHA. interagencystandingcommittee.org/working-group/iasc-guidelines-integrating-gender-based-violence-interventions-humanitarian-action-2015

9 UNFPA. (2019, November). The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergency Programming. www.unfpa.org/minimum-standards

10 Sevenants, K. (2019, September). Evaluation Community-based Reintegration Programme for Children Released from Armed Forces and Armed Groups in Boma State (former Greater Pibor Administrative Area) 2015–2018.

UNICEF South Sudan. www.unicef.org/southsudan/media/2261/file/UNICEF-South-Sudan-CAAFAG-PIBOR-Evaluation-2019.pdf

11 UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. (2020). Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers. childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-child-soldiers/

Group Study on Girls Associated with Armed Forces, and National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission programme and policy documents contributed significantly to the outcome of the study design.

The review helped identify potential key project stakeholders. It also added value to the analysis of the findings and final report writing.

Six focus group discussions were conducted during the assessment in Yambio County. Each focus group comprised of four to five participants and included children and parents of project beneficiaries. Participants generated supplementary data through peer interaction and discussion, where the roles and experiences of CAAFAGs was explored further. These groups included a men's-only group, a women's-only group, mixed men and women groups, a girls'-only group, a boys'-only group, and a mixed girls and boys group. Arranging groups so that one gender could be together ensured that males and females had the opportunity to freely express themselves in a culturally sensitive context on issues concerning GBV. In total, 32 people (15 females, 17 males) participated in the focus group discussions held in all the four payams of Yambio County.

Additionally, 17 participants took part in 15 key informant interviews. Interviews were conducted with government officials, community leaders, officials, women, youth leaders, project staff, and people working in other organisations in the same area. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants that including the State Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, and the Department

of Child Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration, community leaders and chiefs, youth leaders, women leaders, religious leaders, CAAFAG mothers and fathers, CAAFAG boys and girls, World Vision South Sudan staff and Community Empowerment For Progress Organization staff, drawing a total of eight females and nine males.

3.5 Data quality assurance

World Vision supervised the assessment process. Specifically, the team of consultants coordinated with the field team. While in the field, all enumerators received training to assist in data collection. The enumerators sought permission (consent) to collect information and explained to respondents their right to withdraw or disengage at will and at any time during the interviews. Before engaging with children, the enumerators sought consent from children's guardians, parents, or teachers in school for school-going children to build a basis of trust for informed consent.

During interactions, the consultants emphasised children's capacities, not their weaknesses, as their participation was based on their expertise about their own life experiences. The consulting team and the children established an agreement regarding confidentiality at the beginning of the assessment. Interviews were conducted in a safe and strictly confidential space for the children. The children participated in the full knowledge that their real names would not be used in reports. In addition to ensuring transparency about the assessment aims, the processes of child participation in community development issues were done with the consent of relevant parents.

The questionnaire also addressed ethical considerations in data collection, analysis, and presentation. This included concern for any risks related to the assessment and how these would be mitigated. The project sought the prior consent of respondents (voluntary compliance) for participation in the evaluation.

The consultants provided on-the-ground quality assurance checks and oversight throughout data collection, checking through all completed responses daily to address any inconsistencies in time, hence adding value to quality assurance. Before data analysis, data quality checks through synthesis and content analysis were carried out for consistency and correlation of internal logic between related variables.

3.6 Data analysis and reporting

The qualitative data collected through open-ended questionnaires and interviews were categorised, summarised, organised, and analysed according to the themes mentioned in the ToR.

3.7 Study limitations

- Most of the beneficiaries were committed and busy organising their houses for the festive season; therefore, they had no time to attend interviews
- Some beneficiaries are working in the market; therefore, it was difficult to locate them
- It was challenging to locate the local government authorities for the key informant interviews because it was the festive season, and some had already left for their annual leave
- In some instances, the male youth were unwilling to attend the focus group discussions because they demanded money before participating in the process



4. Key Concepts, Literature and Legal Provisions

4.1 Definition of key concepts

In the context of this report, persons below the age of 18 are considered children. The Optional Protocol¹² governs this to the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹³ and International Labour Organization Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour¹⁴.

One must distinguish between children exposed to armed conflict and those participating in it. This study focuses on those participating in armed conflict and those who do jobs or carry out missions for or with armed groups. In this sense, they are real actors in the conflict.

The International Labour Organization Convention 182¹⁵ prohibits „forced or compulsory recruitment of children“ (Article 3(a)). Recommendation 190 that supplements this Convention stipulates in Paragraph 12 that this worst form of child labour

should be considered a criminal offence. It adds that „the use, procuring or offering of a child (...) for activities which involve the unlawful carrying or use of firearms or other weapons“¹⁶ is also to be treated as a criminal offence.

According to child rights advocate Graça Machel, a child soldier is „Any child, boy or girl aged less than 18, who is recruited compulsorily, by force or otherwise to use him/her for combat by armed forces, paramilitary forces, and civil defence units or other armed groups. Child soldiers are used for sexual services, or as combatants, forced spouses, messengers, porters, or cooks“.¹⁷

Children recruited by means other than compulsion or force are also considered child soldiers for this programme. This widens the scope of the research to all children who live with or accompanied armed groups, whatever the motives or mechanisms of their recruitment may have been.

12 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (2000). Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, vol 2173, A-27531.

www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc-conflict.pdf

13 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf

14 International Labour Organization. (1999). Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/childlabour.pdf

15 Id.

16 Id at Article 3.

17 Machel, G. (2000). The Machel review 1996-2000: A critical analysis of progress made and obstacles encountered in increasing protection for war-affected children. UNICEF. p. 5

The term „armed groups“ refers to both State and Non- State armed groups involved in conflict or formed for this purpose. The term group indicates a structure of command exerted over the persons who are its members.

4.2 History of children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAGs)

According to the UNICEF report (2021),¹⁸ thousands of children are recruited and used in armed conflicts worldwide. Between 2005 and 2020, more than 93,000 children were verified as recruited and used by parties to the war, although the actual number of cases is expected to be much higher.

The term „child soldiers“ does not fully capture the extent of forms of abuse and exploitation boys and girls face. Warring parties use children as fighters and scouts, cooks, porters, guards, messengers, and more. Many, especially girls, are also subjected to gender-based violence.

Children become part of an armed force or group for various reasons. Some are abducted, threatened, coerced, or manipulated by armed actors. Others are driven by poverty, compelled to generate income for their families. Others associate themselves with survival or protecting their communities. No matter their involvement, the recruitment and use of children by armed groups is a grave violation of child rights and international humanitarian law.

Children have been widely used and recruited by armed

actors across South Sudan. The practise goes back at least to the early 1980s,¹⁹ when North and South Sudan, then one country, started to engage in a protracted civil war. Despite several significant releases of children from fighting forces over the years, the number of children still associated remains in the tens of thousands, and the recruitment of children persists.

For a long time in South Sudan (and other conflicts), children associated with armed forces and armed groups were often thought to be boys, with only a sprinkling of girls. People associated children involved with armed forces and armed groups as ‚child soldiers‘ carrying and using guns. However, girls were also associated with armed forces and groups in large numbers as domestic helpers (fetching firewood and water, cooking, carrying supplies, and other tasks) and as ‚wives‘ or sexual enslaved people. However, because they were rarely thought of as ‚child soldiers‘, they were usually not included in demobilisation efforts.

As a result, of the 25,298 children demobilised between 1998 and 2014, only about one percent were girls. Similarly, of the 1,683 children released in Pibor County in 2015 to 2018, only 0.5 percent were girls. It was not until 2018 that the vast presence of girls was publicly acknowledged, and they accounted for 35 percent of 745 children released in Yambio²⁰.

Non-governmental and State actors agree that girls associated with armed forces/groups in South Sudan have been invisible. Little is known about their number, experiences, in the

¹⁸ UNICEF. (2021). Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups. www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces

¹⁹ UNICEF. (2021) Practical guide to fulfil the reintegration needs and rights of girls formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups in South Sudan. www.unicef.org/southsudan/media/2296/file/UNICEF-South-Sudan-Practical-Guide-Reintegration-Girls-2019.pdf

²⁰ UNICEF. (2021) Practical guide to fulfil the reintegration needs and rights of girls formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups in South Sudan. www.unicef.org/southsudan/media/2296/file/UNICEF-South-Sudan-Practical-Guide-Reintegration-Girls-2019.pdf

bush, and needs upon release. Except for Yambio in 2018, they have often missed out on demobilisation and reintegration programmes, and such programmes, where they exist, have primarily been designed for boys. This research gap was the starting point of this guide and the research that underpins it.

4.3 Legal provisions related to CAAFAGs

The legal provisions regarding CAAFAGs are best understood if reviewed from the international level, then regional, and completed with South Sudanese domestic law and policies. The rationale behind this approach is that many of the international and regional provisions regarding CAAFAGs and the worst forms of child labour were developed and implemented before South Sudan became a republic.

The first international standards relating to children in the war came out of human rights law, namely, the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949,²¹ that protect hostilities. In 1977, two Additional Protocols to these Conventions were adopted:

- Additional Protocol I²² relating to international conflicts requires State parties to „take all feasible measures“ to prevent children under 15 from being directly involved in hostilities. In addition, if they enlist young persons between the ages of 15 and 18, this Protocol encourages them to prioritise the recruitment of the older among them (Article 77 (2));
- Additional Protocol II²³ relating to non-international conflicts is more restrictive. It prohibits all participation in

hostilities, whether direct or indirect, of children under 15 (Article 4, Paragraph 3(c)).

It is generally accepted that these standards form part of international customary law and apply to all States, including South Sudan, whether they have ratified the relevant protocols. Despite them, the condition of child soldiers in modern warfare did not attract the international community's attention until the 1980s. It was then that the world was shocked to discover that thousands of Iranian children were on the front-line detonating land mines and acting as human shields for their elders who were considered more 'useful'. Knowledge about children involved in Iran's conflict sparked a series of initiatives to end the recruitment of children for use in armed conflict. On several occasions, these initiatives suffered setbacks due to the conservative positions taken by various States.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)²⁴ reiterates the obligations in Additional Protocol I of 1977. It requires State Parties to „take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 15 years do not take a direct part in hostilities“ and refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In addition, „in recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, State Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest“ (Article 38 (2) and (3)). The age of conscription was a subject of controversy during the drafting of the Convention. The articles cited above resulted from a compromise that falls short of the requirements of APII that prohibits the direct or

21 International Committee of the Red Cross. (1949). Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949. www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf

22 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1979, December 7). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I). www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolI.aspx

23 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1978). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II). www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolII.aspx

24 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf

indirect participation of children under 15 in internal conflicts. Besides, it is of interest to note that the age limit of 15 contained in Article 38 is an exception to the Convention, all other articles applying to persons under 18. Presently the CRC can be considered to be almost universally ratified. It has been ratified by 193 countries, the most ratified human rights treaty.

At the turn of the 21st century, international legislation was considerably reinforced. The International Labour Organization Convention on The Worst Forms of Child Labour²⁵ and the accompanying Recommendation, unanimously adopted in 1999, prohibit the „forced or compulsory recruitment of children (persons under 18) for use in armed conflict“ (Article 3 (a)). The Convention places an obligation on the Member States to take immediate action to eliminate this practice. The Recommendation calls for efficient measures to ensure the effective enforcement of the provisions of the Convention, including criminal or other penalties, as appropriate. In this Recommendation, States agree to undertake surveillance mechanisms, action programmes, and measures to prevent children from entering the worst forms of child labour and to withdraw, rehabilitate, and socially reintegrate those who are victims.

The Recommendation also requires State parties to mutually assist each other in giving effect to the provisions of the Convention. International Labour Organization Convention 182 is a landmark in international law relating to child soldiers because, for the first time, it set the minimum age for enlistment at 18 years. It was also the first time that children's use in armed conflict was officially recognised as a form of

child labour. In addition to the specific mention of the problem, International Labour Organization Convention 182²⁶ prohibits persons under 18 being engaged in „work that by its nature or the conditions in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of the child.“ (Article 3 (d)). It gives member States the responsibility of defining hazardous work at the national level in consultation with organisations of workers and employers. States thus have the possibility of going beyond Article 3(a) by classifying, as ‚hazardous work‘, all types of recruitment and use in armed conflict of persons under 18. As of February 7, 2003, 133 member States, three-quarters of the International Labour Organization, had ratified this Convention.

Another significant step forward in combating children's use for military purposes was made on January 21, 2000. After six years of negotiations, the UN General Assembly adopted a new international treaty that prohibits the recruitment of child soldiers. This treaty, an Optional Protocol²⁷ to the CRC, sets the age of 18 years as the minimum age for conscription or direct participation in hostilities and bans all military recruitment and use of children under 18 by armed groups. As of February 12, 2003, the Protocol, which had come into force a year earlier, had been ratified by 50 member States.

The Rome Statute for an International Criminal Court²⁸ defines „conscription or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities“ as a war crime, whether the conflict is international or not (Article 8).

25 International Labour Organization. (1999) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/childlabour.pdf

26 Id.

27 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (2000). Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc-conflict.pdf

28 International Criminal Court. (1998). The Rome Statute for an International Criminal Court. www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/EA9AEFF7-5752-4F84-BE94-0A655EB30E16/0/Rome_Statute_English.pdf

There are, however, gaps in the laws and legal framework that need to be closed. The minimum age provision for work in the Southern Sudan Child Act²⁹ does not apply to children outside of a formal employment relationship, such as children performing domestic work. Children are only required to attend school until age 13. This standard makes children between ages 13 and 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour, considering they are not required to be in school but are also not legally permitted to work.

Moreover, the Southern Sudan legal framework lacks penalties for violating provisions prohibiting children under age 18 from engaging in various kinds of hazardous work. The absence of penalties in article 13 might encourage taking advantage of what seems to be a loophole in article 12 on the legal age of employment set at 12 years.

At the regional level, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child³⁰ requires State parties to „take all necessary measures to ensure that no child (under 18 years of age) participates in hostilities and, in particular, that no child is enrolled in the armed forces by the State“ (Article 22). This Charter, adopted in July 1990 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by the Conference of Heads of State and Governments of the Organization of African Unity, entered into force in November 1999. It is the first regional treaty that deals explicitly with the problem of child soldiers. The Declaration of Maputo concerning the use of children as soldiers (April 1999) calls on all African States to „take all the necessary measures to ensure that no child under 18 participates in armed conflict (...)“.

The Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011 (as amended),³¹ Labour Act, 2017, Penal Code Act, 2008 and the Child Act, 2008³² prohibits the recruitment and use of children. Under the current laws, it is no longer compulsory to serve in military service. Sentences for recruitment and use of children in armed conflict may reach 5 to 10 years imprisonment.

The government directed the issuance of eight command orders by the Sudan People’s Liberation Army, among others they include:

Signing of Action Plan; screening and registration of all children associated with Sudan People’s Liberation Army; permit access to all military barracks; allow monitoring by national and international partners of Sudan People’s Liberation Army units; prohibition of school occupation and prevention of re-deployment of child protection officer to other units.

The Child Act also urges all levels of government to recognise, respect, and ensure the rights of the child enshrined in the Act (Article 36 (1)). The Act goes further in sub-section (2) of Section 36 to place on all levels of government the responsibility to engage all sectors of the society and undertake all necessary legislative, administrative, and other measures to implement the rights in the Act, which include, among other things, taking concrete steps to prevent the sale, trafficking, and abduction of children and to abolish slavery and servitude.

In Article 6 of the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, the government underlines its commitment to

29 Southern Sudan Ministry Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. The Child Act, 2008 (No. 10 of 2008). www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/83470/92194/F822057232/SDN83470.pdf

30 African Union. (1990). African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36804-treaty-african_charter_on_rights_welfare_of_the_child.pdf

31 (2011). Laws of South Sudan: Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011. www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/11/08/transitional_constitution_of_south_sudan.pdf

32 Southern Sudan Ministry Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. The Child Act, 2008 (No. 10 of 2008). www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/83470/92194/F822057232/SDN83470.pdf

reconciliation, accountability, healing, and combating impunity. In the same spirit, the Revitalised Agreement on Resolutions of Conflict in South Sudan provides for the unification of Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition, South Sudan³³ Opposition Alliance, and South Sudan People's Defence Forces to form a national army and the signing of the comprehensive Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan Regarding Children Associated with Armed Conflict in South Sudan in 2020 is another significant step toward consolidating the peace efforts.

The Action Plan states in its preamble obligations to be observed by the Government under national legislation, including the Transitional Constitution³⁴; Southern Sudan Child Act³⁵; the Sudan People's Liberation Army Act³⁶; the Joint Communiqué of the Republic of South Sudan and the UN on addressing conflict-related sexual violence (2014)³⁷; the Geneva Conventions^{38,39,40}; Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴¹ and its Optional Protocols⁴²; relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, including 1539 (2004)⁴³ and 1612 (2005)⁴⁴, as well as subsequent resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict and other commitments including the Safe School Declaration."

Child Protection Units have been established with personnel trained in children's rights. The Child Protection Units work with the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission, the Armed Forces, and the UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan to address the issue of children associated with armed forces and groups, coordinating the identification, verification, and registration of children in military barracks. The National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission also works with civil society organisations that help rehabilitate children formerly used by armed groups.

Through the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission, the government of South Sudan is cooperating with UNMISS, UNICEF, and other international organisations to secure the release of child soldiers from different armed groups. The table below presents data on boys and girls whose release and reintegration was facilitated by UNICEF and UNMISS in various parts of the country during a four year period.

33 International Authority on Development. (2018). Revitalised agreement on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2112

34 (2011). Laws of South Sudan: Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011. www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/11/08/transitional_constitution_of_south_sudan.pdf

35 Southern Sudan Ministry Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. (2008). The Child Act, 2008 (No. 10 of 2008). www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/83470/92194/F822057232/SDN83470.pdf

36 Southern Sudan Ministry Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. (2009). Sudan People's Liberation Army Act, 2009, (No.1 of 2009), dr.211 check.org/document/sudan-peoples-liberation-army-act-of-2009/

37 United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. (2014). Joint Communiqué of the Republic of South Sudan and the United Nations on the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, (UN SRSV-SVC).

www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/joint-communication/joint-communication-of-the-republic-of-south-sudan-and-the-united-nations-on-the-prevention-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence/

38 International Committee of the Red Cross. (1949). Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949. www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf

39 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1977). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)

www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolI.aspx

40 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1977). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II).

www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-additional-geneva-conventions-12-august-1949-and-0

41 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf.

42 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (2000). Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, vol 2173, A-27531.

www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc-conflict.pdf.

43 UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. (2004). Resolution 1539. childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/document/resolution-1539-2004-2/

44 United Nations and the Rule of Law. (2005). Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/security-council-resolution-1612-2005-on-children-and-armed-conflict/

Table 1: List of children whose release from different armed groups was released

Date	State Location	Boys	Girls
December 2015	Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA)	1,750	5
October 2016	Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA)	145	0
May 2018	Pibor, Boma State	207,	3
February 2018	Yambio, Western Equatoria State	248	100
January 2019	Yambio	71	34
February 2019	Yambio	72	49
April 2018	Bakiwiri (Yambio)	137	111
August 2018	Asanza (Yambio)	98	51
2016- 2017	Pibor and Bentiu	99	2

Source: UNICEF, 2018

The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare developed a National Policy on the Protection and Care of Children without appropriate Parental Care in 2017. This policy addresses, among several other issues and challenges, the vulnerability of children to trafficking and sexual exploitation by promoting the protection of children. The Ministry of Gender seeks to ensure that anti-trafficking laws do not have adverse effects and impacts on children on the move through this

policy. An action plan to demobilise child soldiers was signed by UNICEF and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in 2012.

The Government of South Sudan has developed an inclusive national reporting process to facilitate the adequate implementation of its obligations under the CRC and its Optional Protocols.⁴⁵ The government also established a permanent, national coordination mechanism, the High-level Inter-Ministerial Committee and Technical Committee for implementing the Comprehensive Action Plan for the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict, with responsibility for treaty body reporting and involving the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, Ministry of General Education and Instruction, Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development, the National Mine Action Authority, and the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission. The Inter-Ministerial Committee brings together high and mid-level officials from the executive, the judiciary, and the legislatures.

The Labour Act (2017)⁴⁶ in Article 13 prohibits the worst forms of child labour: „No person shall engage or permit the engagement of a child under the age of eighteen years in any hazardous work, which constitutes the worst forms of child labour“ (article 13.1). Article 13(2) identified the worst forms of child labour shall include:

- (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, forced or compulsory labour, and forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;

45 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf

46 Ministry of Justice. (2017). Laws of South Sudan: Labour Act, 2017 (Act No. 64). www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/108606/134332/F-995378113/SSD108606.pdf

(b) the use, procurement or offer of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or pornographic performances;

(c) the use, procurement or offer of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in international treaties as ratified by the government;

(d) Work is likely to harm the child's health, safety, or morals by its nature or circumstances in which it is carried out.



The Minister of Labour is expected to issue regulations establishing a complete list of types of the worst forms of child labour after consultations with registered trade unions, employers' associations, and advice from council.

The Republic of South Sudan has made the following declaration in regard to the application of Article 3 of the Optional Protocol, which states that the minimum age at which it permits recruitment of volunteers in armed forces is 18 years and per section 22 of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army Act, 2009⁴⁷.

The Republic of South Sudan also states that the safeguards provided in Article 3(2) of the Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in the Armed Conflicts and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army Act shall be observed and bound by to ensure that all recruitment is made in public places and not done under force or duress, advertised in the press and national media for young people, the recruits undergo a medical examination, and the record consist of recruitment as appropriate, among others, a birth certificate, certificate of education, or apprenticeship“.

47 Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. (2009). Sudan People's Liberation Army Act, 2009, (No.1 of 2009). dr.211 [check.org/document/sudan-peoples-liberation-army-act-of-2009/](https://www.check.org/document/sudan-peoples-liberation-army-act-of-2009/)

5. Key Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This section presents findings of the Gender Informed Needs Assessment, providing an understanding of the use of children in armed conflict, the roles girls associated with armed forces and groups play in conflicts in the project areas in South Sudan as well as also roles boys play with a specific focus on labour distribution. The report also looks at the life of girls associated with forces and armed groups, responsibilities, and coping mechanisms. It draws lessons on rehabilitation and re-integration approaches (safety and care, social reintegration, and physical and mental health) based on the specific needs of these girls, not forgetting children born out of conflict and rape of these girls.

It further highlights the driving factors behind the recruitment of girls into armed forces and groups and why girls voluntarily join the armed groups or forces. Finally, this report provides guidance on areas of capacity building for the project team.

5.1.1 Contextual analysis

South Sudan is a source and destination country for human trafficking, especially of women and children, for the end

purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. In 2022, more than 2 million people were internally displaced within South Sudan and 2.3 million South Sudanese nationals are refugees in neighbouring countries due to conflict⁴⁸. South Sudanese women and girls, particularly those from rural areas or who are internally displaced, are vulnerable to domestic servitude throughout the country⁴⁹. Also, orphaned and unaccompanied children at internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee camps are at risk of forced labour, sexual exploitation, abduction, and recruitment as child soldiers.

The International Labor Organization estimates that children as young as age 12 are sometimes recruited as soldiers by the different military groups⁵⁰. In 2017, UNICEF verified 140 incidents of recruitment and use of children, affecting at least 1,221 children (1,057 boys and 164 girls). Because of pockets of conflict zones around the country, an estimated 2.2 million (72 percent) of the school-age population were out of school as of 2017⁵¹.

48 UNOCHA. (2022, February). Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan. reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hno_ssd_2022_26feb2022.pdf

49 United States Department of State. (2017). Trafficking in Persons Report - South Sudan. www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282749.htm

50 Human Rights Watch. (2018, February 5). South Sudan: Warring Parties Break Promises on Child Soldiers. www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/05/south-sudan-warring-parties-break-promises-child-soldiers#

51 UNICEF. (2017, July 8). Six years after independence: South Sudan's children wait for peace and prosperity. www.unicef.org/press-releases/six-years-after-independence-south-sudans-children-wait-peace-and-prosperity

5.1.2 Gender roles and responsibilities

The study revealed significant changes in roles and responsibilities played by women, men, boys and girls before and after conflict. Before recruitment into the armed forces, women and girls concentrated on house chores like fetching water, washing utensils and clothes, cooking, collecting firewood, cleaning the house and looking after children, including cultivation. Men and boys often worked in agriculture on farmland and in town at casual jobs to take care of their families.

Women are traditionally responsible for household duties – including collecting water and firewood for domestic use and cultivating land in rural areas. The decrease in the availability of such resources requires women to spend more time travelling to locate drinking water or firewood. They will therefore have less time for other income-generating activities. The amount of time women spend on household activities is likely to increase mother's illiteracy and lack of autonomy which directly disadvantages her young children; harms and constrains the future generation's abilities.



Table 2: Daily activity schedule

Time	Women's Activities	Men's Activities	Girl's Activities	Boy's Activities
6:00 am – 7:00 am	Cleaning the house Washing utensils	Sleep	Fetch water Collect firewood Washing utensils Clean the house	Fetch water Clean the house
7:00 am – 8:00 am	Collect firewood Prepare breakfast	Take shower Eat	Prepare for school	Prepare for school
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Go to farm	Go to work	Go to school	Go to school
9:00 am – 10:00 am	Cultivation activities	-	-	-
10:00 am – 12:00 noon	Cultivation activities, take the child to hospital	-	-	-
12:00 am – 1:00 pm	Cultivation activities	-	-	-
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Cook	-	Cook	Wash uniform
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Prepare food	Eat	Wash uniform	Play
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Take shower & eat	Rest	Eat	Eat
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
9:00 pm – 6:00 am	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep
12:00 am – 1:00 pm	Cultivation activities	-	-	-
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Cook	-	Cook	Wash uniform
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Prepare food	Eat	Wash uniform	Play
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Take shower & eat	Rest	Eat	Eat
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
9:00 pm – 6:00 am	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep

MY WIFE DOES

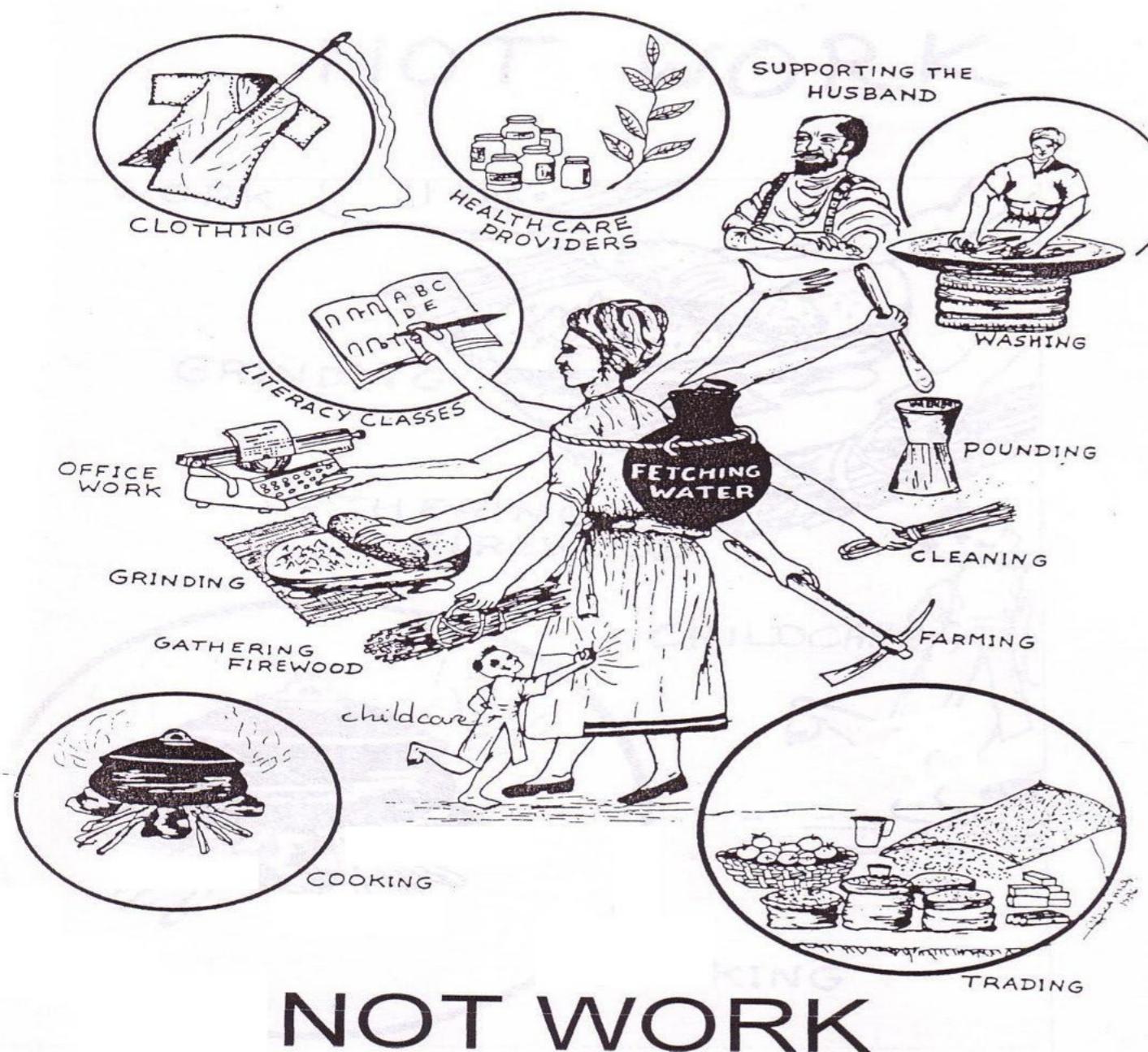


Figure 1: Women as workhorses

In a female-only focus group, a participant said, “Cooking, cleaning the house, and the children are the woman’s role in the house, as defined by Zande culture.” Bricklaying and other casual work helped men get money and provide for the needs of the house.

However, after boys and girls were recruited to the armed groups they were introduced to other jobs. They were used, among others as armed combatants. Girls who were particularly vulnerable victims of abduction often served as sexually enslaved persons and sometimes were sent to the battlefield, enduring grave physical and psychological violations. In many instances, they were forced to commit atrocities in their villages.

In a key informant interview with Jani (not actual name), she explained, “...I was abducted in 2015, and I stayed with the armed group for three years until 2018. While in the bush, each girl was assigned to the commanders...” She continued, “When I was taken sadly, and I was sent to the house of the ‘Big Man’, the commander, to wash his clothes, fetch water, and cook for him...” She added, “On the first day, I thought this was the only job I would do while in captivity, but to my shock, I was told to have sex with him. The first time I resisted, and I was beaten badly. I thought I would die and, out of fear, I started to offer myself willingly.”

Girls were also taken to the frontline to fight. According to Jani, she only fought once in a place called Birisi. She and others fired their weapons to clear the village. They were also ordered to loot for food and other valuables used to sustain the group even during heavy gunfire.

In a boys-only focus group, one of the respondents said, “We did all sorts of jobs, we carried heavy language, we fought in the frontline, we implemented punishments including killing if asked to kill a member who made a mistake, and the list goes on.”

Another member in the same focus group said, “In my group once a week the commanders rested and enjoyed themselves. Many activities were performed for them to watch and relax, for example, two boys would be asked to fight until one killed the other then the game would end. Sometimes you would be asked to sleep with women as they watched.” Another boy whispered, “Even boys were used as sex objects by male commanders.”

As noted above, both girls and boys performed different roles as was deemed necessary, while at other times those roles were the same. They also noted it did not matter whether one was a child or not; they all had to work hard according to the command of the bosses.

5.1.3 Access and control over resources

The assessment found women, men, and boys have access and ownership of productive assets such as land; however, girls have minimal access and control over land. South Sudanese rationalised that women and girls will leave the family and marry elsewhere. This approach is likely to increase the feminisation of poverty, a concept explained by development scholar Sylvia Chant as the “gendered disadvantage among the poor and which highlights the growing responsibilities and obligations women bear in household survival.” The

feminisation of poverty is associated with women’s discrimination and subordination in the market-driven economy with ownership or control of valuable assets and access to economic potentials largely controlled by males.

In South Sudan, women produce 60 to 80 percent of the food.⁵³ Nevertheless, society regards women as assistants on the farm, not as farmers and economic agents on their merit. Therefore, empowering female farmers is vital to lifting rural communities from poverty. When they get the opportunity to manage household finances, women are more likely than men to spend on their family’s nutritional needs, healthcare, and school fees for children. Over the last five years, the people of South Sudan have benefited from government partnerships with development partners to support food security programmes in the country.

Land ownership is another factor in environmental policies and gender equality. There is no written law of South Sudan that discriminates against women regarding ownership of properties. Article 28 of the Transitional Constitution guarantees the right of every citizen to acquire or own property. At the same time, Section 110 (5) of the Local Government Act, 2009⁵⁴ states explicitly that, “Women shall have the right to own property and share in the Estate of their deceased husbands together with any surviving legal heir of the deceased.”

Section 13 (4) of the Land Act⁵⁵ highlights explicitly the rights of women concerning land by stating, “Women shall have the right to own and inherit land together with any surviving legal heir or heirs of the deceased as stipulated in Article 16 (5) of the Constitution”.

53 Republic of South Sudan. (2019). Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/South%20Sudan.pdf

54 (2009). Laws of Southern Sudan: The Local Government Act, 2009. <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/ssd3324.pdf>

55 Id.

Table 3: Control and access to resources

Resources	Access					Control				
	Girls	Women	Men	Boys	PWDs	Girls	Women	Men	Boys	PWDs
Land		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Livestock		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Cash	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Tools	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	
House	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	
Water	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	
Food		✓	✓				✓	✓		
Clothes	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		
NFI Distributions	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		
Health Services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			

The government improved social welfare by expanding the population's access to primary education, health, water, and sanitation services through coordinated and regulated legal frameworks, and provided by local institutions. However, the current conflict has made implementing these policies quite challenging.

The Government of South Sudan has taken several measures to support women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance and raised awareness about gender-specific environmental and health hazards. Regarding women and poverty vis-à-vis women and the economy, South Sudan has taken measures to ensure increased access to and control over land through the development of the National Land Policy (draft)⁵⁶, which is an essential step in participation in decision-making on the environment concerning agricultural productivity and food security.

The Government of South Sudan has been unwavering in its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment as enshrined in the Transitional Constitution and Bill of Rights, which guarantee equality and equity between women and men. This commitment has manifested in progress and improvements in legal and policy frameworks for gender equality.

Table 4: Type of work valued most by women and men

Most valued work in this community (for women and men)	
Women	Men
Cooking	Cultivating
Cleaning the house	Casual work
Cultivating	Bricklaying
Washing clothes	
Cleaning the children	
Collecting firewood	

In general, this research suggests that South Sudanese communities perceive women to be less powerful than men and with less value. Men are regarded as the heads of the families and, as such, are regarded with respect, value and support as they are actively involved in decision making in the community. Similarly, boys are viewed as active, influential and valued by the community. Meanwhile, girls and women are regarded with less value than men and boys by the community.

⁵⁶ Southern Sudan Land Commission. (2011, February). Government of Southern Sudan, Draft Land Policy.

www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/field_protection_clusters/South_Sudan/files/HLP%20AoR/South_Sudan_Land_Policy_2011_EN.pdf.

Table 5: The needs of women, men, boys, girls, pregnant women/girls, mothers and persons with disabilities (PWDs) as identified by focus group participants

Needs for women	Needs for men	Needs for boys	Needs for girls	Needs for pregnant women/girls	PWDs
Food Water Money	Money Food Water	Food Water Clothes Education	Water Food Shelter Clothes	Medicine (health-care) Food Water	Food Medicine Water Clothes
Education Medicine (health-care) Clothes Prayers Soap	Transport means Clothes Medicine (health-care)	Medicine (health-care) Shelter	Education Medicine (health-care)	Clothes Soap Money	

Table 6: Different coping strategies used by women, men, boys, girls, and PWDs as identified by focus group participants

	Coping strategies
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling of agricultural produce (maise, cassava, beans, and other similar products) • Labouring in other people's land (cultivation) • Engaging small businesses such as selling bread locally called 'makati' • Making alcohol (Buda)
Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casual work • Labouring in other people's land (cultivation) • Bricklaying • Selling of agricultural produce (maise, cassava, beans, and other similar products) • House building • Boda boda (motorbike transport service)
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bricklaying • House building • Boda boda (motorbike transport service) • Labouring in other people's land (cultivation) • Selling of agricultural produce (maise, cassava, beans, and other similar products)
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling of agricultural produce (maise, cassava, beans, and other similar products) • Engaging small businesses such as selling bread locally called 'makati'
PWDs	PWDs rely on others for support due to limited capacity and access.

As a coping mechanism, women, girls, and PWD mostly rely on their husbands, brothers, or relatives for financial support. Men and boys rely on themselves in most cases and help from the community.

Table 7: Different skills and capacities of women, men, boys, girls, and PWDs as identified by focus group participants

Skills and Capacities				
Women	Men	Boys	Girls	PWDs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking • Cultivation • Baking • Tailoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Cultivation • Driving and riding • Carpentry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Cultivation • Driving and riding • Carpentry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hairdressing • Decoration • Cultivation • Baking • Tailoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

5.24 Enrolment and life of CAAFAGs in the armed group

5.2.1 Living conditions

Apart from the CAAFAGs abducted and forced to join the armed groups, some of the children said they enrolled because they no longer wanted to burden their parents, who were too poor to afford adequate living conditions for them.

A boys-only focus group revealed that some boys joined because living conditions at home were too difficult. A 16-year-old boy in this focus group said, „I lost my father as he was killed by armed youth who attacked our village one day. My mother is disabled, and I am the firstborn child. I felt bad because I was not helping my family in any way. One day my uncle told me to stop being useless and join my age mates in

the bush so I could provide for my family. I joined.“ He noted he frequently visited his mother and brought food, clothes, and money until their commander surrendered and they were brought back home. He added, „Life is even worse [here], and I wish I had remained in the bush“.

Similarly, a girl who shared her story after a focus group mentioned that her parents could not afford to send her to school. They often spent days without food, and after her mother’s death, she was asked by her uncles to marry an older man. She explained she preferred to join the armed group with the help of a neighbour. Upon return, just like many other stories, the situation in her home had never improved.

Children often voluntarily joined the armed conflict due to poverty. If there had been no conflict at the time, they would have left home to find work or become street children and,

therefore, potential victims of other worst forms of child labour. In situations of armed conflict, the children see enrolment as a means of escaping from the family's poverty and fulfilling their material needs.

Other CAAFAGs mentioned they left their family because they were not accepted or understood, the decision often the result of a long period of conflict with their parents. For children with strained relations with their families, enrolment is a justified way to escape parental authority.

From the focus group discussions with former CAAFAGs, parents, caregivers, and community members, living conditions and situations were persistently financially challenging. Hence, even after returning, many of the former CAAFAGs continued to experience such conditions, as evidenced by their shared narratives.

While support has been offered through the project for the former CAAFAGs, these underlying conditions have to be addressed. Support to families whose children are at risk of enrolment is part of a more general approach that can reduce the vulnerability of children to all the worst forms of labour. Similarly, families who find their children going 'astray' and who cannot communicate with them or warn them of the consequences of their acts need to understand support networks to contact before harm is done. Such help must be locally available and requires a network of trained persons in counselling. Traditional, local structures should be used to counsel parents and children in such situations.

5.2.2 Experiences and punishments for CAAFAGs during captivity

The study revealed varying experiences and events for CAAFAGs from arrival at the camp, handing over the equipment, military training, indoctrination, and invulnerability rites. Those immediately sent to the front line and participated in combat are often ill-equipped and unprotected.

The boys-only focus group revealed that the CAAFAGs often walked for days and engaged in combat barefoot or just wearing the shoes with which they arrived in the camp if they had any at all. One male respondent, a 16-year-old, explained, "When I arrived with other children, we received oversize uniforms, a gun, and a cartridge of ammunition at the end of the training period as a sign of becoming a full-fledged member of the group. I felt happy at the beginning, not knowing what I would face next."

A respondent in the girls-only focus group shared, "On the day I was abducted, we left my village at 6am and started walking through thick bushes, walking and running so that we could get far from the government forces who were chasing us. Two days later the chase ended. Without rest, we stopped to reorganise. We were first asked to swear to be obedient to our commander and were told that if we did not obey, we would be killed. Then they pointed to one of us with a gun as if they wanted to shoot her but then they shot in the air and said that it was a warning to anyone who attempted to escape as they would be killed. We were then given guns and shown how to shoot."

Another member from the men-only focus group said that they often did not sleep; they spent the night spying, looting, and abducting more children and adults to join their group. As this was primarily done at night, in the day they cooked, planned, and looked after their commanders as they rested.

An interview with a mother of a CAAFAG revealed that her daughter received severe punishments for any mistakes she made. When people attempted to escape the punishments were the worst. She said, „My daughter Jalia (not her real name) once told me that while in captivity she dreamt that she was going to school and when the commander found her sharing her story with others, she was beaten for inciting others to think about escaping. As a punishment, the commander said one of the boys should make her pregnant so that she stops thinking about school. That is the day she was raped and conceived in the process.“

The study revealed punishment stories such as beatings, being tied/bonded to trees and being left to be devoured by animals, starvation, drowning in water, among other punishments. Rape and sexual abuse were common, especially for girls and women, as punishment. Forced marriages were also imposed.

Similarly, the interview with a CAAFAG female revealed many of them were asked or forced by their commanders to shoot and kill their friends and anybody they come across from the same village, area, or community. She said, „Even when one of you commits a crime or makes a mistake, a group member is asked to execute that person, and when you refuse, you receive the first bullet.“ She continued, „I killed someone I knew from my village; I do not want to talk about it, but I did it because I wanted to live. I used to feel bad but the project has helped me deal with the feelings. I also told my family about it and they forgave me because I was forced to do it.“





Figure 1: Photo drawn by a female CAAFAG

The drawing demonstrates children's experiences associated with CAAFAGs. In this picture, the CAAFAG, a girl, abducts and tortures some village women during conflict while in an operation where the group was engaged in a confrontation with an enemy. There is an exchange of gunfire between two CAAFAGs and village people, including a pregnant woman, escaping from the violence with their food. They were coming from their garden. However, this 17-year-old CAAFAG girl was beaten by one of the civilians while others fled the scene.

Another male CAAFAG called Tati (not his real name) shared, „Many of the girls were sexually abused. There was this commander who could choose any of the girls he wanted and sleep with them and give us them also if we wanted. He did this anytime, and most times, he asked us to watch and tell him if he was 'powerful'. That is how I thought that sleeping with a girl was sweet. Initially, I wondered why the girls cried in the process. I felt

terrible after knowing rape was a bad thing.“ He continued, „The principle was 'yes for sex', meaning a girl or woman could not say no, and if the commander gave you a girl to have sex with, you could not say no as long as you wanted to stay alive.“ At times boys were chosen too to sleep with girls as commanders watched. They would promote the best performer with better guns and positions.

Similarly, the CAAFAGs also claimed that sometimes they were happy and enjoyed their stay in the bush. These were moments when they went looting and obtained money and valuables such as clothes and shoes from people's shops. A female CAAFAG said, „I loved the clothes and shoes including money, but at times we would loot, and the commanders take all the good things and leave you with very little.“ She sighed and said, „If you have a gun, you are powerful and can get whatever you want at any time.“



Figure 2: Involvement of CAAFAG in the operations



A 17-year-old corporal drew this photo about experience in the conflict which started in 2015 after being abducted. It shows how he and his armed group raided Bariguna, Namytina, and Ezo and even attacked a business truck on Tombura road. These were all close to his base.

5.2.3 Drug use and abuse

The study revealed that CAAFAGs often consumed drugs and alcohol. Commanders provided drugs to make children fearless. Many children consumed cigarettes, alcohol, shoe glue, gunpowder, and other similar substances while with the armed groups. In the boys-only focus group, respondents confirmed they all had consumed drugs and alcohol voluntarily or by force. A member of this focus group said, "I survived in the bush because I used drugs. It helped me to forget about home, and I just followed my commander's orders. This made me stay alive as I did all I was required to do under the influence of drugs." He continued, "Sometimes when my head had cleared, my friends would say I did this or that, but surely I would not remember."

Similarly, girls consumed drugs, along with smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. A girl CAAFAG said, "My commander gave us alcohol and something we did not know, but it made us happy and courageous; that is what sustained me." She recalled a moment when things were challenging, and they had run out of alcohol; all the women and girls were ordered to either loot alcohol or bring items to come and brew as the group was desperate.

5.2.4 Atmosphere in the armed conflict

Except for the moments when they were actively fighting or being punished, despite the horrors, the majority of the children interviewed considered the atmosphere in the group normal, good, or even outstanding. They said they had good relations with their commanders, adult soldiers, and other children. They narrated how they sang, rejoiced

after successful loots, and shared their loot with joy. They drank alcohol, took drugs, and felt happy; this was a good life and atmosphere.

In the boys-only focus group, some of the respondents said that compared to the lives at home before joining an armed group, the atmosphere in the bush was better as they had bad relations with their parents and other family members.

Others talked about high levels of poverty where they even went without food for days. The constant attacks from the armed groups caused them to be afraid, and when they joined the armed groups, they felt life was better. Life with the armed groups provided a new family for children who felt they suffered at home. Another boy in from the boys-only focus group explained, „In the military the commander would ask my friends to salute me when I did something good and reward me with other things too. However, my father often called me useless; he wished I were not born one day.“ When further asked whether he could join the military again should the opportunity avail, he said, „I am now big enough to work and get what I want and, secondly, I did so many bad things back there which I regret. I want to change and be a good person.“

The girls-only focus group revealed similar opinions about the atmosphere in the armed conflict, though many emphasised that it was difficult for most of the time. One respondent said, „You can endure hunger and beating and even forget that you were beaten or ever slept hungry, especially during good times, but you will never forget the rape and sexual abuse you suffered.“ Another said, „Even just not being able to access the most basic needs like hygiene products would make your life

difficult for those days, and at times you would be beaten for being dirty.“

Another girl in the same focus group said, „At times when the commanders had succeeded in a battle, they would be happy and relax and also allow you to relax, we would chat and tell stories and laugh, but this would not last, and chores would surface again.“

However, even though children said that the relations with the adults and other children were good, they did not like being in the armed groups. The circumstances they experienced were beyond their imaginations, and the majority hoped for better lives. In addition, as noted, the atmosphere was crueler for girls and women than men and boys because of rape and sexually abuse.

5.2.5 Departure from the armed groups

The study revealed various options that the children used to depart from the military. Many of them left by themselves on their initiative. The large majority of them had to escape, consciously taking enormous risks. Others were able to negotiate their departure with the intervention of the religious groups and community leaders, including the government, especially an agreement was signed with an armed group.

Those who chose to escape took a great risk. Many were followed and, when caught, were severely punished; others were shot and killed on the spot; while still others were punished and made to die a slow death to serve as an example for others. Another member of the boys-only focus group posed a

question, „You are in the middle of nowhere, which direction would you even start running? You should stay rather than taking the risk.“

When further asked what motivated them to leave (in a mixed focus group with women and men), one female respondent said, „I was just not comfortable with all that we were doing in the military, I did my worst in the military, I just felt God was not happy with me, and I made up my mind to escape, and I did escape.“

A 16-year-old from the boys-only focus group said he felt cheated by the commanders, and out of annoyance, one day, decided to run, but he was caught and punished brutally until they were rescued. He explained, „I voluntarily joined the armed group because they said they would pay us after the conflict. We were told we would get good positions and, based on this promise, my cousin and I joined. He was killed because he demanded the money that was promised, so I realised all was a lie.“

A participant in the women-only focus group said, „I was abducted and left behind my three-month-old baby whom I never stopped thinking of. I had to escape to come to find my baby, the joy of seeing him again makes me work hard to provide for him.“

5.2.6 Life after leaving the armed groups' camp

The study revealed some CAAFAGs are still below 18 years old, meaning they were enrolled in armed groups at a young age. Others grew into adulthood in the bush. Before joining an armed group, many of their living conditions were brutal; this is

possible given the political and humanitarian situation, especially in Western Equatoria State.

This study found many former CAAFAGs left the armed groups with barely any resources. From a show of hands in focus group discussions, about 80 percent admitted having no resources when they returned from their time with the armed groups. One respondent in the boys-only focus group said, „When you choose to leave, its better you leave with nothing, imagine you are caught with money or any other valuable on you while escaping, they will not leave you even if they did not want to kill you, they will not leave you.“

Some CAAFAGs are now married or live with a partner upon returning home, and others now have children. Some said they still fear being re-abducted and re-recruited in the armed groups, as the political situation is still fragile. They are afraid that they may be called to account for the crimes they committed while in captivity. One of the male respondents in a men's-only focus group said, „Some of the soldiers we fought with are with us in the same village. I fear one day any one of them might choose to open a case against me and, as such, I am working hard to raise money to relocate myself from my village.“

The study found that many former CAAFAGs continue to struggle to make ends meet. Some returned to live with their parents, and many youths have no jobs and, therefore, no means to earn income. Similarly, the key informant interview with the State Minister of Gender Child and Social Welfare of Western Equatoria State revealed that life after leaving the armed groups was 'rough' for CAAFAGs. She said, „There is a need to work towards forgiveness and reconciliation so that

communities can holistically accept and welcome their sons and daughters back home.” She said people become afraid when they know that a CAAFAG resides in their community and that, “They described the children as being destructive, ill-mannered and thieves.”

Worst of all, some former CAAFAGs have been caught and accused of grabbing things by force from the community members and physically assaulting the elderly. There are accusations of immorality, including raping, alcoholism, and drug abuse; along with consumption of tramadol and marijuana.

For some female CAAFAGs, there is concern that some engage in alcohol and drug abuse, along with sex work for survival. Many of the women and girls had children born during their time with the armed groups, while they also conceived and bore children at home. Many are unwilling to reveal who their fathers are, placing the burden of raising fatherless children on themselves and on family members.

From the statements above, it is clear that some CAAFAGs keep habits acquired during their stay with the armed groups, particularly regarding the consumption of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

In another interview, a father of two CAAFAGs revealed that he was worried about his two returned sons. He shared that one of his sons is not behaving like an average child for his age. His youngest has been accused of looting, beating others, and rape. He has tried to help them and explained his quandary, “They are mine, I cannot throw them out, especially the bad one said I should not even think of sending him away or else he will show me what he can do.”

We did not ask specific questions about their health; however, none complained of bad health. A mother to a CAAFAG explained, “My son stopped talking when he came back, he is quieter and prefers to stay alone in the room. He refused to share a room with his brothers, yet we do not have enough space in the family house. You hear him shouting as if he is commanding, sometimes he is crying for mercy then during the day he pretends to be fine.” She continued, “Now that he is enrolled into a reintegration programme, I hope that my son can become normal again. I will support him even if other community members have a bad feeling about him.”

With the above in mind, it seems the perspectives of parents of former CAAFAGs and community members vary; with some considering CAAFAGs a danger to the population. At the same time, these children are also perceived as victims, especially to their parents. Similarly, the interview with the community leader revealed that they had no option but to welcome them. The chief, when interviewed, said, “We are on good terms, but we do not mix with them because we are afraid of them.”

5.2.7 Aspirations of the child: From now on, what do I want to be

In an interview, Jani (not her name) said she aspired to study and become valuable in her community, but fate destroyed her dreams. She explained, “The current programme by World Vision South Sudan and Community Empowerment for Progress Organization supported me with the most immediate needs such as clothes and a bag on the day I arrived in the church premises. I was half-naked straight from the bush. I received psychosocial counselling only once, and no one has come to revisit me. As much as I am grateful, this has not

supported my aspirations.” She continued that the fathers of her two children are also CAAFAGs and that they continue to come to her and force her to have sex with them without them providing for the children, and she is afraid they might make her pregnant again. „I do not want to be a wife; it is a waste of my life. I believe given the opportunity in a new environment; I can make it in life.”

Another female CAAFAG interviewed said she aspired to become a medical worker, but as it is now, that hope is gone. She clarified, „I have a child whose father I do not know because I was raped after being beaten unconscious and when I regained, I was bleeding, and the next thing I found out was I was pregnant.” After a moment of silence, she continued, „Prostitution is not a job, I do it to feed my child, if they had not abducted me, I would be in a nursing institute completing my training.” She added, „I have thought of suicide but again I am afraid to die and leave my child without help, armed groups are still looking around for children to recruit, and they might take my son, so I must stay alive to protect him.”

In an interview with former CAAFAG boys who shared their aspirations, many aspired to be doctors, mechanics, national footballers, or, even, a priest. Interestingly, one of the participants in the boys-only focus group said, “Before I went to the bush I wanted to be the army chief of staff. I thought I would study abroad and come to manage our national army, and I later thought that by joining the army I would progress and become what I aspired to be. I know it was the beginning of an end for me.”

The key informant interview with the project staff revealed that one of the project’s activities was to enroll and facilitate

school fees for CAAFAG and other vulnerable children referred through caseworkers into educational institutions, including facilitating vocational skills training fees for CAAFAG and other vulnerable youth.

A labour market analysis is necessary to determine better the type of training required, especially for CAAFAGs participating in vocational training. These courses, when offered, should be complemented with other course content that highlight issues of gender, HIV awareness, civic education, and promotion of children’s rights.

In South Sudan, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction has developed programmes such as the Accelerated Learning Programme and Alternative Learning Programme including flexible learning hours for especially CAAFAG mothers and provided childcare centres for their children to compensate for the years of missed education and, to heal classrooms’ to help children adapt to the needs of civilian life.

World Vision South Sudan should have broader strategies to nurture children’s psychosocial development, including individual counselling, therapeutic workshops, and peer relation and communication sessions to enable children to gain social expression and re-establish their self-identity.

5.2.8 Reintegration opportunities for CAAFAGs

Learning from the experience of past Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration programmes, the reintegration of former child soldiers into civilian life after being demobilised from armed groups is too complex for just one programme or one actor to facilitate the whole process.

The interview with a Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration staff member revealed that the government, in partnership with other programmes, offers a range of services for CAAFAGs, including family tracing and reunification, psychosocial support and counselling programmes, trauma healing and pieces of training of the CAAFAGs in life skills for income-generating activities such as knitting of clothes and sheets and other income-generating activities.

However, the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration staff member noted that reintegration for CAAFAGs is often challenged by inadequate funding of the relevant government departments by the national government.

The key informant interview with a project staff member revealed that the German funded Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) FOCUS project supported 300 CAAFAGs between the ages of 12 to 17 (however, varying numbers were provided by the other project staff interviewed)⁵⁷ of children who were released, reintegrated, and received mental health and psychosocial support, GBV prevention and response services, family-based support, case management, and legal assistance.

The assessment further inquired into the reintegration components offered by World Vision South Sudan. It is noted that psychosocial support was one of the most critical elements in the reintegration of CAAFAGs. It is also the most difficult as it takes longer to achieve tangible results and requires combined efforts of the families and communities. This, therefore, means that both the training of parents, caregivers, social workers, teachers, religious leaders, and other community members should go

hand in hand with the counselling of children who are affected.

The reunification of the CAAFAG with family presents difficulties for both the child and their family, as earlier noted in experiences shared by parents and communities. However, in total, both CAAFAGs and parents express the desire to reunite and live together again. In addition, the project staff said, „Our work does not stop at locating the family of the child but includes some material support for the CAAFAG, including supporting their return to either formal education or training. The livelihood and income generation support targeting the larger community has assisted families and community members in supporting the CAAFAGs better.” A key informant interview with the mother of a CAAFAG revealed that with the support of World Vision South Sudan and Community Empowerment for Progress Organization could take care of her daughter’s baby born as a result of captivity.

In terms of GBV support, GBV services were made available, focusing on women and girls (including pregnant women and mothers) due to their vulnerability to GBV and other forms of violence. The project staff said, „Many CAAFAG girls are subjected to GBV and even rape, so the projects ensure access to GBV services. For example, the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization participates in vital international days to campaign against sexual GBV against women and girls.”

The second project staff said, „You will realise a lot of violence involving CAAFAGs, this is because they act most times violently and do not understand the language of dialoguing and this could be attributed to the difficulties that many CAAFAGs have in relating with people.”

⁵⁷ Currently there is no available updated list of the number of CAAFAGs in the government offices

In the women-only focus group, an interview of CAAFAG mothers confirmed that their daughters were violent and quick to fight to resolve even minor issues. The preventive programme actions, including the campaign against sexual GBV, should also include non-violent methods of resolving conflicts in addition to other response services such as case management and legal assistance.



5.3 Case studies

5.3.1 Case study one

Maria (not her real name), aged 15, was abducted in July 2017. Her late father, Peter (not his real name), was a military man who decided to take his family to their village home in Bakiwiri for safety reasons and farming.

Maria, the only family member, was abducted on her way from fetching water. She was in Primary 6. For Maria, the most painful thing was not being able to see her father's body after he died because of a short illness during her abduction in 'the bush'.

„I must be open with you and say that I was not raped or sexually abused because I think one of the military men knew who my father was. He tried to be protective of me, but not so sure if that was the case, I was not badly harmed or abused like others,“ Maria reflects.

She added that she mostly helped with the cooking, collecting firewood, and fetching water, along with washing the general's clothes, and carrying bags while moving from camp to camp.

„After spending some months with the armed group, I started to figure out where I was and how I would escape one day. One morning, I was asked to go and fetch water, and I decided to escape. It took me a whole day running and walking in the bush. I arrived the following day,“ narrates Maria.

“When I returned home, the situation was terrible. My guardian was afraid that the armed group would follow me, or if the government heard I had escaped from the rebels, they would assume I was a spy. So, I was taken to the community leader, who referred me to Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration staff registered me, and I was officially released and handed over to World Vision South Sudan. I thank World Vision for all the support. I was enrolled in school and am currently in Senior 2.“

Maria is calling upon all well-wishers, government, interfaith leaders, humanitarian actors, especially World Vision South Sudan, to rescue and support other children who are still with the armed forces in the bush.

She stated that children need education, security, and peace to develop and become leaders of tomorrow, not guns and be in the bush.

5.3.2 Case study two

Conflict is a leading cause of the recruitment of children into the armed groups and can destroy a child's future. „That is what happened to the children I watched lose their lives,“ shared Grace (not her real name), a 22-year-old mother of two.

Abducted from their home in June 2015 and taken to the bush for over a year, Grace recalled, „It was 1am when a group of over 15 soldiers stormed our compound and banged on the doors, calling my stepfather by name to open up, or they will shoot. So he did, and in less than two minutes, we all came out and sat on the ground. I was 17 by then and the eldest, so they took my stepfather and me with them.“ She recounts that they shot several bullets in the air then threatened to shoot anyone who tried to escape or show any form of resistance.

According to Grace, they walked for about four hours without knowing where they were going. „My life was obviously at the mercies of God, led by a group of armed men who were drunk. At 4am, but not so sure, a group of men, including my stepfather, managed to escape.“

Grace further said that because they were afraid of being attacked by other groups, they were made to walk for three days without rest until they reached

Suwe. In Suwe, they spent three months attacking and robbing innocent people of their food and belongings.

Grace continued, „In no time, the little girl who once feared guns was now holding one and shooting at people without thinking twice to defend myself and stay alive.“

Grace narrated there were a different set of people in the bush, those practising magic and performing it on every member to protect them from being shot at. Others believed they were fighting for their rights, for promised money, and for positions after the conflict.

„My first terrifying experience was watching over a dead body. The group planned to attack the people coming to pick the body for three days, but fear gripped in as I sat there with other children younger than myself. I imagined myself in that position but did not have a choice to walk away.“

One fateful day, Grace managed to escape and met her family again. She reports, „In December 2016, they sent us on a mission, and four of us out of 20 decided to escape. We spent two days running for our lives, and on reaching home, my family could not believe it was me. The whole neighbourhood was in tears. In barely a day, the news got to the camp that I was home.“

Grace lived in hiding for a year (2017) for fear of being killed if caught by the group after escaping. „Upon hearing the news of registration on the radio, my uncle rushed to register my name, which gave me the courage to come out after a year of hiding and start living in Yambio town with my uncle. I was taken to the Child Transit Centre.“

Grace said, „When I thought the horror was over, a chapter of nightmares opened up. Innocent people crying and begging for their lives and dead people attacking my sleep became a real part of me. I would wake up screaming in the middle of the night, people called it imagination, but it was real“.

While at the Child Transit Centre, World Vision South Sudan, through its social workers, distributed clothes, non-food items, and dignity kits for the girls. The social workers also provided psychosocial support to the children assigned to them, made referrals to the hospital when a child in the Child Transit Centre is sick, conducted home visits, and supported family tracing and reunification.

Grace said, „I refused to say a word or even listen to the social worker but later realised that he was helping me; his efforts helped me regain my sanity, and slowly the nightmares stopped. After more than three months, I enrolled in Tindoka (a vocational school) for tailoring training.“

Upon completion of the training from World Vision South Sudan (with funding from UNICEF), CAAFAGs receive start-up kits for businesses. Grace felt that, „Four years down the line and I am stronger than before. I use my tailoring machine to support my family. I am also married with two lovely children, and my husband rides a Boda boda (a motorbike transport service) as I support the family with my tailoring business.“

5.3.3 Case study three

Paula (not her real name) left her father's house in Juba as soon as she got pregnant as a 16-year-old girl in 2016. Her father, who was not ready for additional responsibility, chased her out of his home to a jobless young boyfriend. The latter then decided to send her back to join his family in Yambio at Asanza residential area.

Back home, life was hard, which forced her into farming to earn a living and put food on the table. One day she decided to go to the family farm in Nangbimo to get cassava leaves (dadia). On the morning of 4 May 2017, she was attacked by armed men who only asked her to move and compromise if she cared about her life. „I was abducted on my way alone to our garden, taken to an unknown location, leaving behind my six months daughter with my mother-in-law,“ she said.

Like any abducted person, „I joined the group mixed with children and adults as we moved for two nights and days before reaching the camp in a place I did not know since I was new in Yambio.“

„While in the bush under the custody of the armed group, we were given different roles. In most cases, I was cooking, fetching water, and spying, but all this was done in shifts and under supervision. I was not at peace with myself because I did not know how my

daughter was doing and what they would do to me or anyone in the next day or night to come. To be honest, moving at night was the worst experience because you have no light and no idea of where you are going and when you will reach your destination.“

Paula, who spent nearly three months with the armed group before leaving said, „As time went by, the armed men trusted us ladies that they could even leave us to go and fetch water alone. One day with the help of three other women, we escaped. It took us three days to reach the main road to Bazugua. When I reached home at around 8pm, I found that my family had moved out of the house for fear of arrest or abduction from the same armed group. With the help of the neighbours, I could locate them, and everyone was so happy to have me back home. I was glad to see everyone and the daughter I left behind.“

„After a few days, I noticed my family members were discriminating against me, and neighbours referred to me as a rebel or wife of rebels. This was posing a real risk at the time. I even questioned why I should continue living, but in October 2017, the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation Commission registered other child soldiers, including me. On 7 February 2018, we were officially released. I was taken to Child Transit Center and attached to a World Vision

South Sudan social worker for the case management process, and I spent one year before my reunification with my parents in Juba on 24 April 2019.“

Paula, who completed her vocational training in electricity and insulation, said that the training is helping her provide for her basic needs. The money she earns from work supports her child and pays school fees for her younger sister. „I always what imagine my life would be like without the support from World Vision South Sudan but conclude that God is great.“ She also acknowledged the challenges she faces in terms of people thinking the profession she has chosen (electricity and insulation) is only meant for men. Despite this, Paula still hopes to start her company to supply electrical equipment once she gets some capital.

“My appeal to everyone is to support girls because girls of South Sudan have experienced all kinds of suffering. As I talk to you now, I still have friends associated with armed men trapped in this situation and environment. They need your help now, and not even tomorrow!“ Paula concludes.

6. Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

6.1 Lessons learnt

The interruptions for CAAFAGs to their child and adolescent development, mainly emotional development, have negative consequences deep into adulthood; in fact, the negative manifestations in girls are even greater than in boys. It might be challenging to address child and adolescent developmental issues during such programming, especially those related to the girl child. This aspect is vital because reintegration programmes are often time-limited, and very little longitudinal research shows the relevance of addressing developmental issues in former CAAFAGs, especially girls. However, an extensive evidence base shows that distressing, traumatising childhood experiences and an inability to complete development processes due to external circumstances can negatively impact adulthood.

In terms of schooling for CAAFAGs, schooling options and training are significant while noting that formal schooling is more of a priority for CAAFAG than engaging in vocational training, especially for younger ones. While the primary purpose of

secondary schooling would be to enter university, chances this will happen are meagre. As such, entering secondary school brings some risks instead of vocational training that gives more certainty about providing future income.

6.2 Recommendations

It is crucial to increase awareness, enhance cooperation, and extend coordination between the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission vis-a-vis military authorities with the state, social partners, and civil society in general on the implications and obligations resulting from the ratification of International Labour Organization Convention 182,⁵⁸ the CRC,⁵⁹ the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children,⁶⁰ and the Rome Convention.⁶¹

Enhancing awareness and mobilising parents, teachers, animators, and community leaders to adopt attitudes and behaviour towards children that prevent recruitment and promote their reintegration with a specific focus on factors that mainly motivate the recruitment of girls and their specific needs during

58 International Labour Organization. (1999). Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/childlabour.pdf

59 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf

60 African Union. (1990). African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36804-treaty-african_charter_on_rights_welfare_of_the_child.pdf

61 International Criminal Court. (1998). The Rome Statute for an International Criminal Court. www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/EA9AEFF7-5752-4F84-BE94-0A655EB30E16/0/Rome_Statute_English.pdf

reintegration is needed. Additionally, setting up a parent-to-parent support groups could allow parents to learn and share experiences on how they can build and mend relations between CAAFAGs and their parents, caregivers, and community.

Diversifying learning, educational, and training options to establish literacy, basic education, vocational training, and civic instruction for CAAFAGs and at-risk children is important. The coordination for re-recruitment is still apparent.

Future programmes should be gender-sensitive and should seek the input of girl CAAFAGs in the programme design, which is vital for the reintegration process as a whole and ensures equitable access to the support services for both boys and girls. Gender-sensitive programming will allow Community Empowerment for Progress Organization to adjust their services based on the specific needs of girls CAAFAG. Standardised programme design does not currently address her needs.

Focus group discussions openly deliberated on the essence of jobs/employment. The unemployment situation has persisted from before their recruitment into the armed force and even after their release. Therefore, there is a need to create mechanisms for job placement diversify support for income-generating activities informed by a job market analysis to ensure that both women and men get suitable jobs in line with their attained skills.

In the presence of limited resources, families feel overburdened and cannot satisfactorily fulfil the needs of former CAAFAGs, let alone having to support additional children born during captivity. Strengthening support to families and the

community to facilitate children's social and economic reintegration is required.

Some former CAAFAGs interviewed mentioned that they received psychosocial counselling only once upon arrival from the armed groups. Given that healing is a process, it would be good to set up a counselling and follow-up system, particularly for vulnerable children.

Enhanced and continuous dialogue and engagement with the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission, Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare, and the South Sudan Defence Force would promote the peace process and strengthen security measures to protect former CAAFAGs and their relatives from recruitment and re-recruitment into armed forces.

In reference to the challenges relayed by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, World Vision and Community Empowerment for Progress Organization should enhance the capacity of the Ministry and other relevant institutions such as the State Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission to render these structures and institutions more efficient and sensitive to the needs of children, especially the girls and women and be able to provide a comprehensive package of support for CAAFAGs

Similarly, the reintegration of former CAAFAG is a development undertaking that government should lead rather than an emergency operation. The project should continue to engage the state government in joint planning, putting National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission at the forefront.

While promoting their reintegration into society and giving attention to the unique situation of particularly vulnerable girls, an integrated approach to the needs of children and their environment should be adopted to protect them and satisfy their fundamental needs for health, education and leisure.

Coordination and partnership between the different international agencies, active in programmes of prevention of recruitment and reintegration of former child soldiers, should be reinforced.

6.3 Conclusion

Varying testimonies of CAAFAGs about their lives in the armed group described physical, mental, and moral violence. The difficulty parents of former CAAFAGs experience in living and communicating with the children emphatically indicates the degree of complexity of reintegration required to return the children to their everyday lives. Programmes that are dedicated to preventing and rehabilitating are required to be functional, practical, and sustainable in stopping the recruitment of children into armed forces and groups and enabling their reintegration in the long run.

In South Sudan, the demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers, including the CAAFAGs, is part of the general conflict resolution process and construction of peace. It is only in a context of peace and renewed development that meaningful reintegration, when implemented, can give the expected results complemented by improvements in accessibility to health care, education, and other essential services that meet the needs of children.

Critically, the question of CAAFAGs is part of the more significant issues of child labour. The solutions and strategies developed should ensure that children who leave armed groups do not become victims of other worse forms of child labour because of the lack of real possibilities of social and economic reintegration.

World Vision's project is part of a larger strategy for tracing, reunification, and integrating former CAAFAGs back into society. With experience in vocational training, protection, gender, and livelihood programming, and other relevant project components, World Vision has contributed effectively to national efforts to prevent recruitment and facilitate the reintegration of former CAAFAGs.

Several obstacles limit women's participation in the development efforts within their organisations and their communities. Whereas in South Sudan, women are active in the agricultural sector, few have control over land and other resources, including training. Instead, they work in clans and family farms held and managed by their husbands or men from their families. In addition, the additional burden of housework only done by women in most households limits the time they can devote to the plots of land they can access or control. Moreover, women have minimal control of inputs and benefits as men control farm incomes. Women are mainly excluded and this needs to change.

7. References

(2009). Laws of Southern Sudan: The Local Government Act, 2009. <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/ssd3324.pdf>

(2011). Laws of South Sudan: Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011. www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/11/08/transitional_constitution_of_south_sudan.pdf

African Union. (1990). African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36804-treaty-african_charter_on_rights_welfare_of_the_child.pdf

Boswell, A. (2021) Special report: Conflict and crisis in South Sudan's Equatoria State. United States Institute for Peace. www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/sr_493-conflict_and_crisis_in_south_sudans_equatoria.pdf

Chant, S. (2008). The 'Feminisation of Poverty' and the 'Feminisation' of Anti-Poverty Programmes: Room for Revision?, The Journal of Development Studies, 44(2), p. 165-166.. doi.org/10.1080/00220380701789810

Human Rights Watch. (2018, February 5). South Sudan: Warring Parties Break Promises on Child Soldiers. www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/05/south-sudan-warring-parties-break-promises-child-soldiers#

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2015, August). Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery. UN OCHA. interagencystandingcommittee.org/working-group/iasc-guidelines-integrating-gender-based-violence-interventions-humanitarian-action-2015

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2017). The Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action. UN Women. www.gijahandbook.org/#en

International Authority on Development. (2018). Revitalised agreement on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2112

International Criminal Court. (1998). The Rome Statute for an International Criminal Court. www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/EA9AEFF7-5752-4F84-BE94-0A655EB30E16/0/Rome_Statute_English.pdf

International Labour Organization. (1999). Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.
www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/childlabour.pdf

International Committee of the Red Cross. (1949). Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949.
www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf

Machel, G. (2000). The Machel review 1996-2000: A critical analysis of progress made and obstacles encountered in increasing protection for war-affected children. UNICEF. p. 5

Ministry of Justice. (2017). Laws of South Sudan: Labour Act, 2017 (Act No. 64).
www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/108606/134332/F-995378113/SSD108606.pdf

Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. (2009). Sudan People's Liberation Army Act, 2009, (No.1 of 2009).
dr.211 check.org/document/sudan-peoples-liberation-army-act-of-2009/

Republic of South Sudan. (2019). Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).
www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/South%20Sudan.pdf

Sevenants, K. (2019, September). Evaluation Community-based Reintegration Programme for Children Released from Armed Forces and Armed Groups in Boma State (former Greater Pibor Administrative Area) 2015–2018. UNICEF South Sudan.
www.unicef.org/southsudan/media/2261/file/UNICEF-South-Sudan-CAAFAG-PIBOR-Evaluation-2019.pdf

Southern Sudan Land Commission. (2011, February). Government of Southern Sudan, Draft Land Policy.
www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/field_protection_clusters/South_Sudan/files/HLP%20AoR/South_Sudan_Land_Policy_2011_EN.pdf

Southern Sudan Ministry Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. (2008). The Child Act, 2008 (No. 10 of 2008).
www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/83470/92194/F822057232/SDN83470.pdf

Southern Sudan Ministry Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. (2009). Sudan People's Liberation Army Act, 2009, (No.1 of 2009), dr.211 check.org/document/sudan-peoples-liberation-army-act-of-2009/

UNFPA. (2019, November). The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergency Programming.
www.unfpa.org/minimum-standards

UNICEF. (2007). The Paris Principles: Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed force or armed groups, p. 7. www.unicef.org/mali/media/1561/file/ParisPrinciples.pdf

UNICEF. (2017, July 8). Six years after independence: South Sudan's children wait for peace and prosperity. www.unicef.org/press-releases/six-years-after-independence-south-sudans-children-wait-peace-and-prosperity

UNICEF. (2019, February 12). More than 3,000 children released from armed groups in South Sudan since conflict began, but thousands more continue to be used. www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-3000-children-released-armed-groups-south-sudan-conflict-began-thousands-more

UNICEF. (2021). Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups. www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces.

UNICEF. (2021) Practical guide to fulfil the reintegration needs and rights of girls formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups in South Sudan. www.unicef.org/southsudan/media/2296/file/UNICEF-South-Sudan-Practical-Guide-Reintegration-Girls-2019.pdf

UNMISS & UN OCHA. (2022). Attacks on civilians in Tambura County: June-September 2021. www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Tambura-Report.pdf

UN OCHA (2019). Humanitarian needs overview: South Sudan. reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South%20Sudan%20-%20Humanitarian%20needs%20overview%202020.pdf

UN OCHA. (2022). Humanitarian needs overview: South Sudan. reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hno_ssd_2022_26feb2022.pdf

UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. (2004). Resolution 1539. childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/document/resolution-1539-2004-2/

UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. (2020). Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers. childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/global-coalition-for-reintegration-of-child-soldiers/

United Nations and the Rule of Law. (2005). Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/security-council-resolution-1612-2005-on-children-and-armed-conflict/

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1978). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II).

www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolII.aspx

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1979, December 7). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I).

www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolI.aspx

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (2000). Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, vol 2173, A-27531.

www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc-conflict.pdf

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child.

www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (2000). Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, vol 2173, A-27531.

www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc-conflict.pdf

United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. (2014). Joint Communiqué of the Republic of South Sudan and the United Nations on the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, (UN SRSG-SVC). www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/joint-communicue/joint-communicue-of-the-republic-of-south-sudan-and-the-united-nations-on-the-prevention-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence/

United States Department of State. (2017). Trafficking in Persons Report - South Sudan.

www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282749.htm