



War Child

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Chapeau

War Child is committed to addressing the urgent and complex challenges faced by children and youth affected by armed conflict. With a focus on international peace and security, Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) integration, youth and future generations, and transforming global governance, War Child advocates for tangible actions, increased funding, and enhanced collaboration to protect and empower the most vulnerable victims of conflict. From addressing the six grave violations under CAAC to promoting meaningful youth participation, War Child's comprehensive approach emphasizes the critical need for international cooperation, comprehensive programming, long-term funding for reintegration, and removing barriers to ensure the voices of conflict-affected children and youth resonate in global governance.

- **Strengthened commitment and continued international cooperation** (governments can do this through dedicated policy statements and support at international forums)
- **Increased funding** that supports child protection work such as education and reintegration
- **The development of a more comprehensive approach** (a focus and investment on prevention, early warning protection and support for children).
- **Enhancing mechanisms for monitoring and reporting** support for international efforts to hold perpetrators accountable
- **Collaboration with international organisations** that specialise in child protection and armed conflict to leverage expertise.

Reintegration

While child recruitment into armed forces and groups has a long history, the last decade has seen new trends and norms emerge. Numbers are increasing, with children ever more exploited to commit extreme violence. Children are used for fighting, as spies and for sexual purposes. Girls, too, are vulnerable to association with armed groups, and the repercussions of such involvement are severe. Their roles within these groups may vary, but the distinct nature of their participation exposes them more to the risk of sexual exploitation. In 2020 there were an estimated 337 million children (more than one in eight globally) living in conflict areas with known child recruitment¹. The magnitude of the problem emphasises the urgent need for global leadership to secure the future of millions of children.

War Child calls upon the UN to increase and reconfigure its support for the reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAWAG)

- x Reintegration programming is hugely underfunded. **There is a desperate need for multi year, predictable, sustained funding for reintegration.** Responding to recruitment and successfully, and sustainably, reintegrating children and youth back into communities and families requires a holistic, social, biological approach. This cannot be achieved with current funding models.
- x Closely linked to this is also the need **States to advocate against the criminalisation, detention and mistreatment of children who have been recruited.** Recruitment and use of a child is a grave violation of children's rights and there is currently a need to ensure that reintegration programmes are supported and barriers to reintegration are removed. (a)2

periods of time, meaning they will not have always been able to reach high level of educational attainment. Young people will be experiencing significant strains to meet their own and their families' daily needs, meaning they are more likely to be engaged in long work hours, high level of domestic responsibility, labour, or the worst forms of labour. They will be facing security threats and oppression by armed groups, forces, states. **Continuing with a 'business as usual' style of youth engagement approach will facilitate their participation. Youth engagement opportunities need to be more flexible and meet youth 'where they are'**

This should include:

- Longer lead in times that help facilitate reaching out to these harder to reach youth. This includes identification and recruitment of young people for opportunities (such as consultation and participation in research and reports, and for representation opportunities, such as joining advisory groups) for travel and visa arrangements for events, to undertake and engage in any required tasks/activities related to the work
- Remove requirements for high level of educational attainment or for prioritizing youth who have achieved this. Look for relevant skills and experience that have been required outside of internships or formal work experience, for example activism in their own communities
- Remove requirements for specific language skills (e.g. fluent English) and provide translation support
- Cover all costs associated with engagement, including travel, maintenance, visas, accommodation and any other direct cost that may act as a financial barrier to youth engagement.
- Utilize a wider variety of promotional platforms for opportunities and work with specialist I/NGO and youth organizations and teams. Advertise opportunities outside of UN networks, use local languages, work with external organizations and youth movements to cascade information on good time for engagement
- Work with organizations that can offer intermediary support, including identifying youth, overseeing safeguarding needs, coaching and communication etc.
- More effort needs to be made to engage children and youth in all pillars of the UN and especially within the Peace and Security Pillar, which currently lags behind others in terms of child and youth participation. For youth affected by armed conflict this is especially important.

⁶ Save the Children: *Together we decide, strengthening children's participation in UN processes:* <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Together-We-Decide-6th-pp.pdf/>