



Save the Children

Emergency Assistance for Unaccompanied Children in Bunia, Beni and Mambasa, Eastern DRC FINAL REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION :

Background

The Province Orientale and the Beni region in the North Kivu have undergone various war situations. The latter had to welcome any people coming from Ituri, Mambasa... The armed confrontation between the RCD-ML on the one side versus the MLC and RCD-N on the other hand at the end of 2002 caused violent clashes and aftermath. Cases of human rights abuses: rape of girls and women, cannibalism acts...have been observed. This occurred in the South of the Ituri region, in *Mambasa, Nyakunde, Mungwalu and Komanda* entities.

A new war burst out again in Bunia and compelled more than 80% of the population to flee away from the town towards Beni, Uganda, Mambasa and the interior parts of Ituri.

As a consequence, the town of Beni and its surrounding areas received an influx of displaced people arriving in the Beni zone, fleeing these atrocities. Estimates on the number of displaced people who have arrived in Beni town and surrounding areas is estimated at more than 300.000 persons of whom a big majority is living in 19 sites/camps for displaced. Among that figure some of the people were displaced in the Ituri interior part and others went to Uganda.

Some humanitarian organizations have been present on the field. Merlin, MSF, World Vision, CESVI, CECA 20, premiere urgences et Solidarites have provided assistance to the displaced population.

About Beni, SC UK child protection staff and PAV (Program d'Assistance aux Vulnérables had conducted a six day joint assessment mission on the impact of the current conflict on children. The team held discussions with international and local organizations that are operational in Beni, as well as with local communities, local leaders and displaced persons. Lots of child protection issues were noted such as street children, child soldiers, malnutrition, poor access to basic services, sexual abuses of young teenagers, etc but the issue of family separation was identified as priority. A caseload of about **2,797** separated children has since then been identified by a network of local NGOs in *North Kivu and Bunia*. Few actors were involved in tracing and reunification of this caseload, except that they concentrated their efforts to the mere work of identification and registration of separated children. Separated children mainly came with extended families or occasional foster families, as they had left their parents and other family members behind in Ituri. Since April 2003 a quick and emergency response action for these separated children was compulsory since they make a category which is commonly exposed, in the context of DRC, not only to economic and physical exploitation but also to child recruitment and sexual abuse.

II. Program Goal and Objectives

Goal

To increase the protection of war affected children in Ituri through their reunification with families and relatives.

Objective 1

Verify the status of current caseloads of identified separated children and promote their quick reunification with families and relatives.

Activities:

ADECO (Action pour le Développement Communautaire), a local NGO working in Beni and other partners in Beni and Bunia have identified 2,797 separated children following field assessments on the Beni-Butembo axis and in camps/sites of displaced *and during the implementation of the project before the end of June 2003.*

- *Provision of various briefing sessions with members of the local NGOs and community volunteers to clarify the concept of separated and unaccompanied children with increase role allocated to displaced community structures.*
- *Training of ADECO, CERAO, MAED, RED CROSS, PAV, TDE, FFEPM, PAMA, APEI, AMAB...s staff, community volunteers and other local agencies on IDTR (identification, documentation, tracing and reunification) methodology, communication with children and preparation of children for reunification.*
- *Joint field visits conducted with ADECO's staff and other agencies to newly accessible communities to interview children and assess their status.*
- *Follow up on the the 2,797 outstanding caseload of separated children in Beni and Bunia as part of the process of tracing their parents.*
- *Establishment of a data base of 2,797 identified*
- *Cross checking of a caseload of : 2,797. SC UK 's staff and Partners in Beni and Bunia verified all the actual caseload and this amount of work enabled the family tracing in both areas which resulted in the transfer of children from Beni to Bunia and vice versa and also important reunifications. So far 485 children have been transferred from Beni to Bunia and 40 from Bunia to Beni.*
- *Family tracing and reunification of 2,030 separated children in need. Remaining figures : 767, Bunia : 302, Beni : 465.*
- *Regular supervision and exchange information between SC UK and ADECO in Beni and between the team in Bunia and Beni.*
- *Establishment of a system of information exchange between the SC UK teams in Uganda and the DRC on the tracing effort for children identified in both countries. Two visits have been organised one in Uganda and another in DRC.*
- *Provision of assistance: logistical, financial and office supplies to ADECO and to other local partners: CERAO, MAED, Red Cross, DIVAS, in Beni and to PAV and to other local associations in Bunia so as to facilitate their field activities: follow-up of reunited/fostered children and preparation of children for reunification in Beni and other local agencies in Bunia on the tracing of the parents of children identified.*
- *Establishment of seven tracing points in Bunia and Beni : two at the Airport camps and one at Yambi Yaya in Bunia and one at each of the following places in Beni region: Oicha, Eringeti, Butembo and Beni, to facilitate the sharing of information about documented children to the returning population and to identify separated children who may be returning amongst the population either alone or in foster care.*
- *Provision of a short transit accommodation of one or two days stay in Beni to unaccompanied children who return to Bunia.*

Objective 2

Develop a local capacity capable of ensuring the identification, family tracing and reunification of separated children in the future.

Activities:

- *Support and strengthening the Child protection co-ordination structures in Beni and Bunia to facilitate the reunification of separated children.*
- *Capacity Assessment of identified NGO and selection of those involved in IDTR activities.*

- Organisation of *second level* training sessions for selected partners and the Division of Social Affairs. Some of the topics that were covered: a) communication with children/ conducting interview with children; b) identification, documentation, tracing and reunification methodology, c) the importance of a family environment for children, d) care and protection of separated children, e) basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, f) prevention of family separation, etc. **400** people attended these sessions both in Beni and Bunia.
- Initiation of a coordination system between selected local partners, SC UK and the DIVAS. Various exchange of data meetings were organised between partners both in Beni and Bunia. They enabled partners to do better their job.
- Supervision of IDTR activities of selected partners.
- Consolidation of the caseload in a unique and harmonized database. All the lists of partners were shared and made one list. This list allowed tracing and children reunification.
- *Setting a mechanism in place for the prevention of family separation in at-risk communities such as Bunia Beni, Butembo and Mambassa. Messages have been produced and disseminated in those areas.*
- Support to local NGO partners in the production and dissemination of prevention of separation materials.

III. CONCLUSIONS:

Considering the activities fulfilled and some targetted measurement indicators, it is noticeable that the OFDA project has come to its end with a more less complete response to the foreseen objectives.

According to available information detailing the status of the caseload identified by ADECO, PAV and their collaborative local partners, all the identified children were verified and the results determined those who were separated children and unaccompanied children.

Up to now 72,5 % of children with tracing needs have already been reunited with their families and relatives.

Documentation and follow-up visits to reunited children and their families have been operational.

Apart from ADECO, in Beni and PAV in Bunia, other forementioned NGOs, were selected as partners or implicated in the IDTR activity and trained.

Exchange meetings with local partners, SC UK and the DIVAS have proven efficiency in the work. Besides, other international partners have been implicated in the meetings in order to sort out unaccompanied children problems by sharing the information.

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