

Final narrative report for Social Welfare and Protection – Assisting Street Children in Kinshasa
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- 6) **Project Duration** The grant began on 29 February 1999 and concluded on 31 March 2003.
- Phase One - 29 February 1999 - 28 February 2001.
 - Phase Two - 1 March 2001 - 28th February 2002
 - Phase Three - 1 March 2002 - 31st December 2002
 - Phase Three extended until 31 March 2003.
- 7) **Current report period** Final

Summary

The aim of this programme was to reduce the factors that place children involved with the street in vulnerable situations and to improve the life chances of those already at risk in the Democratic Republic of Congo. To achieve this aim, Save the Children UK conducted a thorough situation analysis of children in Kinshasa, using the results to develop targeted and relevant projects to address the issues raised.

The initial research was concluded by August 1999. The SC UK approach sought not to oversimplify the methodology of planning by viewing all street children as one homogenous group dealing with the same issues. From the outset it became clear that behind the façade of the visible child on the street lay complex reasons for their involvement in and on the street. Conclusions centred on the need for a programme to deal not only with problems that occur as a result of being

on the street, such as weaknesses in the juvenile justice system, but one that attempted to tackle some of the root causes of separation from the family unit.

The research was participatory including representation from 615 children, 130 NGOs, associations and religious groups and international partners. USAID was also involved.

The following groups of vulnerable children were identified; street children who spend all their time on the streets; child sex workers; children living in institutions; orphans who have lost both parents to HIV/AIDS; working children who live at home but work to support themselves and their families; children in conflict with the law who have a police record, are in prison or a remand home; children accused of witchcraft and rejected by their families and communities; children who have their own children; truant children who do not go to school regularly and often have very low literacy levels; children who attend school regularly and live at home. The full research report is available from SC UK upon request.

Through the identification of the above mentioned categories of vulnerable children and an analysis of the problems involved, the overall goals and objectives of the programme were formulated:

Overall goal: To strengthen the formal and informal structures within the urban communities of Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu in order to increase the survival and development opportunities of vulnerable children and reduce their exposure to separation, exploitation and abuse.

Objective 1: To establish a community-based child protection networks (CCPN), consolidate these and build their capacity and that of local partners so that they are more responsible in fulfilling their respective roles.

Objective 2: To promote access to appropriate basic services and to improve the local environment within the project areas for the benefit of vulnerable urban children.

Objective 3: To assess the existing legislation and police framework in relation to the protection of children, including children in conflict with the law. To promote respect of the rights of children within the law as well as institutions and draft recommendations for improved policy and practice based on compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These objectives remained fundamental to the core of the programme and were discussed and reviewed at regular intervals both internally and with donors. One critical phase of the work occurred in March 2001 when the programme was evaluated by the University of Kinshasa, consultation took place with USAID and a workshop was held to assess progress to date. The key recommendation from this consultation was that the numbers of partners we were working with should be reduced as some were found to lack the capacity to manage the funds they had been granted. It was also felt that we should redirect our energies into motivating, empowering and organising community leaders to better tolerate and understand children in times of trouble. This aspect would be met through the introduction of Community Child Protection Networks to facilitate

community mobilisation and access. It was at this point also that we decided to consolidate the participatory research we had done in Bukavu and Goma and expand the programme in these areas. Children in Goma and Bukavu were also found to be lacking access to the most basic of services and recognition of their rights. It was felt that once these structures were set up and strengthened we would then withdraw and they would be sustainable by themselves.

Context

Our research and programme implementation was conducted within an ever-evolving political and economic climate in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This backdrop impacted in both negative and positive ways on the progress of our work and those vulnerable families in the areas we were working.

As our research began, the liberation war had started in the east of DRC leading to the ousting of ex-President Mobutu and the succession of Laurent-Desire Kabila. Under Kabila, further fighting broke out with neighbouring Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi violating the Lusaka cease-fire agreement. As a result of this conflict the economic fabric of Congolese life has been eroded, many lives have been lost and thousands of people have been displaced.

The initial focus of this work was in Kinshasa, with an estimated population of 8 million. The conflict has consequently left this overpopulated city with limited resources to support its people, a poor infrastructure and a non-existent budget for mainstream service delivery. The conflict took its toll on INGOs in February 2000 when SC UK and others were forced to reduce the scope of our activities as a result of the ban on the circulation and use of foreign currencies, making it difficult to purchase supplies. SC UK conducted a Household Food Economy analysis in June 2000 and this highlighted that as the demands for casual labour fell and the prices of food went up, poverty levels increased.

In January 2001, Laurent Kabila died and was succeeded by his son Joseph who from the outset emphasised his commitment and willingness for peace. Significantly for SC UK work, he made some fundamental steps for the betterment of child welfare. He ratified the operational protocol to the CRC concerning children in situations of armed conflict in order to bring about an immediate end to the recruitment of children under the age of 18 and the withdrawal of all underage soldiers from combat positions. He launched a national sensitisation campaign on the process of DDR and formalised the national co-ordination structure for the DDR for vulnerable groups called BUNADER. He also ratified the ILO Convention 182 concerning the worst forms of child labour. These were positive moves on his behalf although as of March 2003, work to formalise these in practice is not yet forthcoming.

Insecurity, especially in the east of Congo continued as RCD troops took a stand after being left out of the power-sharing agreement between the Congolese Liberation Movement and the Kinshasa government after the Inter-Congolese dialogue. Due to the widespread insecurity in rural areas of South and North Kivu, a large percentage of the population arrived in the towns of Goma and Bukavu adding to the pressures on the already neglected social infrastructures and children's access to basic services. The Inter-Congolese Dialogue concluded in December 2002 and a new constitution was agreed at the end of March 2003. As the grant came to a close, arrangements were being made for the installation of a transitional government and agreements were reached

with the Ugandan, Zimbabwean and Rwanda governments for the withdrawal of their troops from the Congo.

Unfortunately however, the humanitarian situation deteriorated again as the Mai-Mai took over in the east making 80 percent of these territories inaccessible. With the involvement of Ugandan, Rwandan and Kinshasa governments, the ethnic tensions in Ituri worsened in Bunia with considerable loss of life.

The impact of the war, displacement into cities and economic collapse were evident in the urban areas of Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu. The principle impact on children's lives was identified in the lowering of parental capacities to respond to their children's needs. This was compounded by the impact of HIV/AIDS infection and a rise in mortality rates with children becoming increasingly vulnerable to separation and abandonment.

These factors resulted in more children being visible on the streets, an outcome that the municipal government in Kinshasa reacted to by forcibly rounding children up. International agencies working on behalf of children were able to stop the round up but without adequate social structures to assist these children, they returned to the streets again which sadly is a cycle that is hard to break.

Achievements

The key objectives as defined through the research, have remained at the centre of this programme. The activities, workplan and partner involvement have remained fundamental elements and we have tried to expand and refocus over time to ensure maximum impact. Since inception this programme has gone a considerable way to achieving its objectives and results are outlined below:

Objective One

To establish a community based protection networks, consolidate these and build their capacity and local partners so that they are more responsible in fulfilling their respective roles.

From the outset, the work was planned in phases making maximum use of community partnerships with local organisations. Working in this way produced some good results such as comprehensive situation analyses and greater access to the targeted populations. However, owing to the results of the evaluation conducted in March 2001, we decided to reduce the numbers of partners we were supporting and redirect our energies towards motivating, empowering and organising community leaders to better tolerate and understand children. To meet this objective, the focus shifted to setting up Community Child Protection Networks (CCPN) to facilitate community mobilisation and access. This mechanism also allowed us to integrate our work on child soldiers, thereby taking on board recommendations from USAID to give greater focus in this area.

Until the above mentioned re-focusing of the programme, information was being disseminated locally through organisations and through the information centre in Mapela, in the Masina district of Kinshasa. BICE¹ and SC UK for example, were promoting child protection, training staff in literacy development, social/judicial protection and basic management.

Through the course of the programme, Save the Children was successful in developing seven child protection networks in Kinshasa. These multidisciplinary groups include involvement by the police, social welfare groups, juvenile justice judges, nurses, teachers, government officials, traditional and religious leaders and youth group leaders to ensure all forms of protection are represented. The CCPN in Mapela undertook a census of all children in its district and categorised them according to the types of problems and the socio-economic situation. In Lemba and Kinshasa-Matonge, SC UK supported a project to collect information on child abuse – the most common being sexual abuse, arbitrary arrest by the police, forced early marriage, children accused of witchcraft and non-payment of school fees by parents. These surveys link directly into the planned programs of child protection in these communities.

In March 2001 we expanded our work to the Kivus in eastern DRC. Community Child Protection Networks were set up in Goma and Bukavu based on the Kinshasa model, but reshaped to accommodate rural community structures as distinct from urban structures in Kinshasa. In Goma, a committee of 38 members was established and a co-ordinating board of six members and activities are implemented through two sub-committees with child representation. In Bukavu, the committee is led by a small group of people responsible for the mobilization of all human and

¹ Bureau International Catholique pour l'Enfant

material resources available in the community, and are therefore best placed to be involved in this programme.

Training on key issues was held in the two communities on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, community and family reintegration. As frequent consultations took place it became clear that one of the big problems faced by people in these districts is limited access to other areas in the district. For example, Nyamiera is on a hillside and separated from the rest of Bukavu by a bridge that is frequently washed away in the rainy season. Through this programme, Save the Children provided material assistance to reconstruct the bridge in order to re-establish proper access to education and health for these communities.

Through the setting up of Child Protection Networks, we were able to give a structure to the work we had already started on identification, documentation, tracing and reunification of child soldiers. SC UK provided training for local partners and government officers in our methodology and the NGO platform, GADERES² (with BUNADER³ and UNICEF), began a series of seminars for military authorities and civil society representatives to discuss relevant issues. As a result of this, regular meetings were held with donors and representatives from international organisations to discuss ways forward. Key partners for Save the Children in this area were ANNEVOMP⁴, ASCDE⁵ and PAYSANAT who all had a level of expertise in demobilisation and reintegration activities.

Through liaison with these partners it became clear that perceptions and approaches of partner staff to child soldiers were quite simplistic and lacked analysis of the reasons for vulnerability and how to deal with it. We also had to suspend work with ASCDE as there were concerns raised about their financial management. The revolving reintegration activities led by PAYSANAT were however sustainable and successful. SC UK also supported the work of ANNEVOMP focusing on 500 self-demobilised child soldiers in 32 military camps in Kinshasa and supporting ASCD in their work with former child soldiers. This involved training children in agricultural and livestock skills and assisting 110 ex child soldiers in cultivating a small field and animal husbandry project.

Save the Children went some way to address the lack of analysis that partner organisations faced by organising presentations on the principles of separation and reintegration at the University of Kinshasa, running a five day workshop for Kinshasa social services department and representatives from key NGOs, Ministry of Social Affairs, Youth and Sports and participating in a GADARES seminar on the DR process for civil society representatives.

In addition, training and capacity building was provided for the CCPNs in a variety of areas. In Kinshasa, SC UK organised four training sessions on child rights, participative action-research, childcare and literacy for teachers in charge of remedial courses. Three CCPNs were consolidated in Kinshasa and activities refocused to support micro-projects and primary schools. The second was to raise awareness of the networks amongst authorities and civil societies. The groups have already held sensibilisation campaigns involving key actors.

In general training and capacity building of CCPNs focused on the following areas: advocacy and communication techniques, child rights and protection and family mediation techniques to reinforce community capacities.

² Groupe d'Action pour la Demobilisation et Reinsertion des Enfants Soldats

³ Bureau de Nationale de la Demobilisation et la Reinsertion

⁴ Association Nationale des Femmes et Enfants Veuves et Orphelins Militaires et Policiers

⁵ Alliance se Secours Chretien pour la Developpement de L'Enfant

Objective Two

To promote access to appropriate basic services and to improve the local environment within the project areas for the benefit of vulnerable urban children. Prevention of separation. To strengthen livelihood systems and to promote the access of all households to a secure livelihood

Planned Activities:

- 1 **Education** – general mapping of practice and problems of access to basic literacy and vocational training across the education sector. Close- up work with implementing agencies working on education to develop a longer- term strategy for education for SC UK and curriculum development and training of social workers and law students in child rights.
- 2 **Health** - Mapping exercise conducted to look at interventions in the health sector including referral systems and the feasibility of cost-recovery systems.
- 3 **Water and Sanitation** – Develop systems to provide communities with safe and clean environments and investigate and support community initiatives.
- 4 **Emergency Protection** – Training of SC UK management and key partner staff in the prevention of separation, tracing and reunification. Promote better alternatives for children who are particularly high risk such as child witches and child soldiers.
- 5 **Food Security**
 - Collation of information on the nature and extent of the problem of destitution in cities. Dialogues with WFP and consideration of ways of reducing costs to poor consumers through co-operative purchase.
 - Carry out social and economic research in selected communities to focus interventions. Household Food Economies carried out in these communities and recommendations on how the most destitute households could be included in main stream activities.
 - As a result of research and informed by activities of other agencies, interventions to promote food security and livelihood security at community level (eg micro-credit, urban agriculture)

Results Achieved:

1 Education

Mapping work was conducted on the institutions and structures organizing professional training to inform SC UK on the available sources of education of benefit to vulnerable school children. It became clear that access to quality schooling was hampered high school fees and a poor standard of teaching. To address the lack of access to schooling, SC UK, in conjunction with CAREP⁶ and AELF,⁷ tested and developed an accelerated education curriculum designed to enable children to re-integrate into the main stream education system. The teaching was flexible and timetabled to meet the reality of street children's lives. The system was piloted in the Mapela information centre for children and

⁶ Centre d'Apprentissage et de Recuperation des Enfants a Probleme

⁷ Association d'Etudiants Luttant Contre la Faim

results were high with an 82% success rate and acknowledgement from the Ministry of Social Welfare.

In conjunction with OCHA, PNUD and representatives from the Ministry of Education, support for transferring national exams from the east was achieved to ensure children's right to education in a war context. Disability issues also became a focus for SC UKs education work with particular reference to blind children who were identified as having even fewer educational facilities and have three hours for their exams to be translated into Braille. SC UK successfully worked with the Ministry of Education to develop cost- effective tools to help children to read Braille.

In the later stages of the programme, 30 literacy trainers were trained in Nyamiera in the east on literacy techniques and setting up a literacy training programme.

2 Health

In co-operation with the School of Public Health in Kinshasa, SC UK carried out three months worth of research in the communes of Kikimi and Biyela. The findings revealed that: 30% of the children were malnourished, over 50% of children complained of fever and 15% from diarrhoea. From these statistics, SC UK developed plans as follows:

- 1 To promote regular attendance of mothers at antenatal clinics
- 2 Ensure regular health education for parents and children
- 3 Ensure the early detection of malnutrition through school visits by health workers
- 4 Improve school children's awareness of hygiene
- 5 Support five health centres

Services were provided in the child's community of origin in addition to the city centre to avoid concentration of services in the city. Work was centred around establishing health funds with health zones for children to access treatment, while the work in the city was based on referral. Four health social funds were set up in Masina in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, health zones of Masina and Kingasani; NGOs, private health services and church groups. The income to sustain the funds came from animal husbandry activities (pig farming and rabbit rearing) and agricultural activities. Over time these activities began to produce income for the purchasing of drugs and SC UK was able stop providing financial support to these initiatives.

SC UK conducted a nutrition survey in Masina in order to estimate the nutritional status of children aged between 6 and 59 months, determine the demographic composition of households and evaluate the coverage of feeding programs in the populations surveyed. Results showed that there was 11.0% global malnutrition and 2.1% severe malnutrition in households that faced parental loss and general food insecurity. The additional activities developed as a result of the survey were as follows:

- Through currently existing structures, predict, prevent and mitigate the worst effects of child malnutrition in emergency situations
- Promote the practice of exclusive breast-feeding of children up to six months from birth
- Reinforce the capacity of the Mamans Bongisas- how to recognise oedema and how to use MUAC as a quick, cheap and relatively effective method for screening malnourished children for referral to health centres

- To reinforce the capacity of health centre staff on how to identify oedema and how to use weight for height charts for identifying malnourished children for referral to feeding centres.

In conjunction with the introduction of Child Protection networks under objective one, SC UK began to introduce community-based health committees, piloted in the health zones in Masina and Kisangani. The purpose of the committees was to mobilise community members to form groups that undertake health promotion. These groups had the most impact in reaching children who had not been part of any formal vaccination campaign for polio. Awareness to the prevention of cholera was also a function of these groups and since this intervention there have been no cases of cholera detected in any of the health zones. SC UK helped the Inspection Provinciale de Sante to detect the measles epidemic in its early stage in 2002 and strengthened the cold chain in 15 vaccination centres and three central offices to assist in the prevention of measles in Kinshasa's poor neighbourhoods.

3 Water and Sanitation

In Masina, SC UK has developed 15 youth clubs that carry out sanitation activities as a way of obtaining payment for medical expenses. The rubbish that is collected is recycled and sold to women involved in kitchen gardening as fertiliser. There have also been sensibilisation sessions with communities on hygiene and sanitation to raise awareness of communicable diseases through dirty hands and unsafe water and the use and consumption of potable water. SC UK has also helped give support to sanitation micro-projects involving setting up communal latrines and rehabilitation of water sources.

4 Emergency Protection

SC UK worked with a health NGO network in Masina training 15 NGOs in the preparation of emergency health plans, one for cholera and one for flash floods.

In partnership with CAFES, UNICEF, Italian Co-operation and the French Ecole de Lille, a three year programme of social work training started for 526 participants and will continue beyond the life of this programme. In addition, with help from SC UK, CAFES have trained 50 NGOs in the basics of DDR work.

5 Food Security

SC UK conducted a Household Food Economy Analysis in Masina concluding that the 'poor' are mainly landless people who either rent land or work the land for richer households. They have no assets, animals or capital. The children do not attend school but work, earning up to 40% of the monthly income needed by their families. Key strategies from this study were to increase poor households access to animal and land assets. Small animals including chicken and rabbits were suggested as a source of income and a diversification of diet. Also households should diversify crops cultivated in kitchen gardens including those that have a higher nutritional or economic value than the cassava leaves that are currently grown.

SC UK has done extensive work with GRAMID⁸ and the Red Cross involving monitoring mechanisms for credit programs and how profits can be saved as goods that do not lose their value over time. GRAMID assisted 72 working children by providing credit to girls to work in alternatives to high-risk activities such as sex work. The work has been evaluated and has been found to be highly effective and sustainable.

SC UK also helped to set up two-community based bakeries where 200 women benefit under the supervision of two congregations of Sisters. Beneficiaries are organised into a sales team after some training. Identified women are able to pre-order bread returning their revenue to the project at the end of the day and are paid 25% of their turnover as profit at the end of each month.

Lastly, SC UK has been working with a local NGO called PAYSANNAT to re-integrate 30 street children of whom 14 are child soldiers. Through visits to the family home laying the groundwork for return and the provision of rabbits to produce offspring that in turn provides income, the project has been successful and provides a means for children to contribute to household economies and kept them off the streets.

Objective Three

To promote a legal framework for children based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and to increase protection for children within that framework. To assess the existing legislation and policy framework in relation to the protection of children, including children in conflict with the law. To build consensus on policy and practice for children among implementing agencies in Kinshasa and to contribute to the development of SC policy and practice in urban areas.

Activities identified:

1. To participate in current discussions concerning child law reform and to support the implementation of reformed law with the aim of incorporating the United Nations CRC. To place emphasis on diverting children away from court and finding alternatives to custody.
2. To support and review the legal curriculum through the training of judiciary, law enforcement agencies in the working environment.
3. To support sustainable ways of protection, survival and development of children held in custody.
4. To develop a code of practice for children living in institutions and promote effective implementation of this.
5. Workshops for implementing partners will be held on SC policies and practices.
6. Child-focus research initiatives will be supported and a central database developed.

Results achieved:

1. Initial work in this area focused on laying the foundations of future activities with consultation meetings being held with human rights agencies, NGOs, university professors, lawyers and

⁸ Groupe de Recherche et d'Appui Methodologique aux Initiatives Developpement

judges. Discussions also took place with the Ministry of Social Affairs to review how the CRC and other international human rights instruments could be incorporated into the legal system. From these meetings, it became clear that the approach to CRC progression could only happen if the Congolese 1950 Children and Young Peoples Act conformed to the CRC. Without the relevant mechanism to synthesise these, no progress could be made. The Government was however involved in discussions on CRC through the production of a report on their approach to its protocols to be presented to the UNCRC committee. This report stressed positive progress on the demobilisation of child soldiers, which unfortunately was refuted as factually incorrect by NGO reports.

The early stages of the programme overlapped with the UN Special Session on children where SC UK had a large presence. In DRC, SC UK facilitated three forums in Kinshasa, Mubji-Mayi and Goma to build understanding on the UNCRC with children. After this there was a regional conference held in Kinshasa and the children developed a declaration of their perspectives that would have been presented at the special session in New York had the terrorist attacks on New York not occurred.

Although hampered by the lack of mechanisms to review and revise the 1950 Children and Young People Act, our work on legal reform continued primarily through support to a partner NGO called BICE⁹ who have many years experience of working with children and the law. BICE were proactive in re-establishing the work of the sub-commission on legal reform, with representation from NGOs, Ministry of Social Affairs, Justice and the High Court. BICE set up a sub-committee to advocate with the government to support the group. Advocacy targets were developed from this group to publicise the importance of child focused law reform, an agreement was reached to develop a code for the legal protection of children and establish a children's tribunal.

One key development from this work was the submission to parliament to raise the legal and penal age from 16 to 18, to set the penal minority to 13 years and to establish special legal procedures for minors in accordance with CRC. To date this is still under consideration.

In addition, through SC UK support, BICE were able to enhance their work in court and prison welfare for children. Throughout the course of phases 1 and 2, BICE ensured cases of arrested and imprisoned children were followed up with social workers, cells were divided according to age and gender and probation, social and judiciary staff were trained in child focused methods of care and rehabilitation.

As outlined, primarily through our work with BICE, we were able to make progress in key areas of legal reform. However, progress was slow owing in part to the political context and lack of formal mechanisms to review amendments. We concluded, through recommendations from the University of Kinshasa, that we would concentrate our efforts on analysis of existing legislation, some of which we were able to complete through practical work as mentioned above.

Achievements in this area were the commissioning of a study into the juvenile justice system in Kinshasa that highlighted the absence of juvenile judges where offending children are treated like adults. There was also no differentiation of children according to age or gender, lack of appropriate establishments for child offenders, no appropriate methods for trying children at the courts, lack of respect for existing legislation and widespread violation of the rights of children.

⁹ Bureau International Catholique pour l'Enfant

CPE (Conseil Provincial de L'Enfant (CPE)) was contacted at different levels in order to establish a legal framework of protection of children. It was widely felt by those consulted that many contacts did not understand the role of the CPE. Training sessions were organised by Save the Children to improve co-ordination.

SC UK also developed a working relationship with the CPE (The CNE is the National Council for Childhood and the CPE represents its provincial arm) in order to ultimately develop and implement a code of practice in children's institutions. A consultative assessment took place between seven institutions taking care of children and CPE members in order for the standards to be set. The findings showed that most institutions did not have any standards in place at all and efforts regarding family integration were rare. This means that some children stayed in homes up to the age of 18 then left to go back on the streets. Minimum standards of care were piloted by four NGOs to date.

Data has also been collected in Goma and the Kivus in collaboration with the DIVAS on residential care. This will provide SC UK with a fuller picture of the situation in these areas for future work.

With regards to enhanced policy and practice our work on this began in February 2000 with an induction workshop over three days to familiarise partners of SC UK policy and administrative procedures. This was expanded to the commune of Masina where publicity of child friendly flyers was distributed to promote and help others understand our work.

SC UK was also proactively involved and responsible for two major inter-agency meetings in Kinshasa regarding demobilisation and work with street children. Inter-agency staff took the presidential decree as a starting point agreeing that a practical work plan needed to be drafted with the Ministry of Defence.

In the late stages of the project, SC UK organised two-day training workshops for eight judges and five magistrates covering the following: basic conditions to be respected by judges, procedure and drafting of judgements in private law concerning children, delinquency in childhood and the impact of the internationally ratified instruments relative to the rights of children.

To ensure learning and development was occurring in this programme, SC UK conducted an internal review of its work with an important focus placed on partnerships. The review revealed that we should be working with fewer partners and enhancing the work we are doing with those remaining. Future targets in this area gave consideration to providing capacity building workshops regarding accountability with other NGOs facing the same problems. The review pointed to a more productive relationship between commune authorities and community based organisations than between NGOs and commune authorities. Both communities and communes were reluctant to work with NGOs imported into the area to undertake a piece of work contracted by SC UK.

The review showed that SC UK has engaged effectively with CNE and CPE and Provincial health, pointing to our better relationships with the government being at provincial level. Generally, it was seen that SC UK needs to engage more with the central government in an attempt to strengthen their capacity to plan and make policies while not overlooking the role of civil society in doing this.

We decided to tackle this as part of our overall objective of working to build and consolidate the Community Child Protection Networks and consequently a wider discussion on progress is shown under objective one results.

Kivus

Little was possible in the way of legislative reform due to the war and partially functioning government in the east. Some discussions on documenting experiences did take place however. One positive result was the setting up of the CPE in Bukavu who now hold regular meetings. SC UK is working with two active agencies in the east – Parent d'enfant (PARDE) and Carrefour d'Enfants du Congo (CARECO). Though CARECO in South Kivu, children have met the Governor of the province and made some important suggestions aiming at improving their rights.

Problems encountered

This programme was initiated with a detailed situation analysis of the children of Kinshasa living on or being of the street. The research was wide ranging and resulted in the categorisation of children into various groups with mixed problems. SC UK were aided in this work by various organisations in Kinshasa that were already working in various ways to support vulnerable children and our initial aim was to work through these groups.

The original number of partners was unlimited because we were keen to develop access to children and knowledge of their situation. Through an external evaluation held in March 2001 by the University of Kinshasa, we decided to reduce the number to 11 focusing on quality interventions rather than quantity. We acknowledged that a number of organisations whose internal capacity on a number of levels was questionable. Although it was clear their work was relevant and made a difference to the lives of the children involved, judgements about their ability to manage funds provided by Save the Children for example were in some cases ill founded.

As discussed under Objective One, by reducing the number of partners we were working with, we re-focused our energies into strengthening the capacity of those remaining in proposal writing, financial management and report writing. SC UK formed links with the School of Public Health in this to second experienced research staff to work in supporting partners.

It was also felt that partners were weak in their knowledge of monitoring and evaluation. To address this we organised a workshop with the aim of arriving at a common understanding of the concept of monitoring and evaluation and determining the types of information that should be collected in each sector.

Our work was hampered by the ever-worsening economic situation that was evolving in Kinshasa. As inflation rose, more people became unemployed and poverty levels soared. For the families identified in this programme, this situation meant that more children began leaving their homes to begin work on the street to help earn money for the family. Levels of health and nutrition were dropping as people were unable to purchase dietary requirements. As an organisation we initially faced problems of implementation as prices were at such a level we couldn't purchase the supplies we needed.

Another major obstacle we faced was in dealing with the Government in the development of child focused revisions of the law to ensure that these were in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the early periods of the programme, the government had signed up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child but had made no movements in developing a workplan for implementation. This situation was assisted in our favour when Joseph Kabila succeeded to the presidency and was eager from the outset to prove to the world his commitment to peace and global human rights. However, even with this encouragement, progress was slow because to incorporate the CRC into law meant a review of existing laws, an impossible task in some cases as there was no official mechanism to do this. The Department of Justice was hostile to any interference in this area as they did not see this as the business of outside agencies. Government departments also lacked resources and staff were often de-motivated or underskilled.

Conclusion

This programme has evolved over five years and provided valuable insights into previously undocumented and analysed aspects of children's lives in DRC. Notwithstanding the problems and difficulties we encountered, we have developed an enormous amount of data on children. The initial research conducted provided categorisation of children involved with the street who had previously been grouped together as one group of poor children without analysis of the variety of issues involved. The programme has sought meaningful approaches to dealing with all these children in appropriate and sensitive ways from income generation activities for child sex workers, to segregation of children in prisons from adults and those of the opposite sex.

We have also developed a fuller picture of household economies and nutritional status' and their link with working children. Developing lasting strategies and reversing these trends are beyond the scope of this programme. However, through piloting income-generating projects with partners we have laid the foundations for development of similar projects in the future.

Knowledge regarding the role and position of the justice system regarding children has been significantly enhanced. We are now aware of the obstacles to recognition of child rights and have laid the foundations for future development which we are hopeful will have the full backing of the Government of DRC.

Throughout the whole programme, our focus was to involve local community actors in the work. This was relatively successfully given the lack of capacity and knowledge of many of the groups. SC UK have acknowledged in the final evaluation, that initial targets to work with many partners was short-sighted and assessment of partner capacity should have been given greater priority from the outset. In attempts to address this, we reduced the number of partners we were working with and concentrated on building capacity and knowledge. This became formalised through the Community Child Protection Networks in Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu. We considered access to beneficiaries through these mechanisms as more appropriate as they were best placed to understand the needs of communities and disseminate child-focused information.

The success of this work can be seen from continued funding that has been secured. We currently have a co-operative agreement with USAID that focuses on separated and abandoned children and a grant from the World Bank for demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers. It is hoped that through this work we will broaden our knowledge about vulnerable children and bring about lasting recognition and implementation of child rights in DRC.