

## Report on Joint BICC-WVS Workshop in Thiet (Tonj South County) 30 April – 03 May

### 1. Background

#### 1.1 WVS' "GoG project"

The objective of the GoG project is to strengthen community capacities to reintegrate former child soldiers and to protect all vulnerable children in targeted communities. We intend to achieve this by empowering civil and military stakeholders to actively participate in the reintegration and protection process, tracing families and/or home communities of former child soldiers and facilitating reunification, and increasing community services to support the needs of vulnerable children (education, vocational training, recreation).

Obviously, the most tangible part of all those efforts is the organization of accelerated learning programs, literacy/numeracy courses, vocational training courses and sports activities. Returning child soldiers will not be targeted explicitly and exclusively to avoid discrimination and stigmatization. Instead, all vulnerable children living in a given community (notably returning refugees and IDPs) will have access to these services.

For the implementation of the GoG project, WVS is relying on community structures which have been created through previous projects, notably the Child Welfare Committees (CWC) established and supported through the UNICEF-funded Child Protection project. The CWCs consist of volunteers from the community who advocate for the respect of child rights and follow up on individual cases of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation as well as family tracing and reunification. In addition to our support to these CWCs, we also work directly with children to raise their awareness about their rights and about ways to access and protect them. This includes work with three youth groups in the area that are currently constructing youth centers and planning to launch income-generating activities.

#### 1.2 BICC's "TRESA project"

Through its TRESA project, BICC is developing and implementing a methodology for the delivery of courses related to small-arms control. BICC is carrying out field tests on this methodology in a number of countries including Sudan, where it is planning to

cooperate with WVI, PACT and the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, covering different areas of the country as well as different target groups.

Courses are designed in a modular fashion that allows fine-tuning to specific local conditions, while still maintaining methodological coherence. BICC is prepared to adapt its course for the specific needs of our GoG project.

### 1.3 Links between the two projects

The focus of TRESA is on small arms control whereas the GoG project is centered on child soldier reintegration. There is a clear overlap between the two: the reintegration of child soldiers is not likely to be sustainable in an environment where small arms are widespread and insecurity is inhibiting social and economic development. The key difference between the focus of the two projects is that small arms control looks at the connections between security and development whereas child soldier reintegration is more concerned with need to protect children's rights rather than to promote security.

The target groups of the planned TRESA training and of the GoG project are largely the same: youth, civil society actors, civil and military authorities. However, while TRESA intends to mobilize them for the purpose of effective small arms control, the GoG project is intended to engage these actors in efforts to improve child reintegration and protection in the social and economic sphere. Given the different objectives of the two projects, WVS and BICC collaborated closely to design a workshop that would cover both small arms control and child reintegration, targeting youth (including former child soldiers) as well as community members involved in child protection (as members of local CWCs).

## 2. Curriculum

The two agencies agreed that community security and small arms control are fundamental issues in the process of reintegration, especially for the youth. Therefore, the curriculum was structured in way that would highlight the connections between these issues:

### 2.1 Introduction

The facilitators, Julie Brethfeld (BICC) and Willem Jaspers (BICC), began by inviting the participants to describe the role of youth in their communities. Participants explained how a typical day in their life looks like and then brainstormed on expectations of youth and towards youth.



Figure 1: Participants painting the "perfect community"

## 2.2 Community security

The next element of the training examined the security situation in local communities. Participants formed working groups and conducted a mapping of the situation in their personal environment, indicating which areas in their villages or regions are considered insecure and discussing the different types of threats faced by the population.

## 2.3 Small arms

The participants did categorize small arms as a factor contributing to insecurity, but they also made clear that in certain situations community members need to be armed to defend themselves. One example cited repeatedly was the issue of violent clashes between cattle herders in the grazing lands during the dry season. Unless they armed, they are not able to defend their livestock against theft.



Figure 2: Community security mapping

## 2.4 Small arms control and development

Once participants became aware of the fact that small arms can contribute positively and negatively to the security and well-being of their communities, they understood that small arms control is essential to minimize the hazardous effects of arms proliferation. However, participants agreed that merely controlling the trade in, possession of and use of arms through law enforcement agencies is not likely to be effective in the local context. Both the supply side and the demand side of the small arms problem need to be addressed. Especially the young members of the community need alternative, non-violent options to meet their needs, above all through access to education, vocational training and livelihood opportunities.



Figure 3: Participants during a role play on armed violence

## 2.5 Reintegration

The participants discussed this in conjunction with issues arising from the process of reintegrating returnees, former child soldiers and others arriving in the communities. To sensitize them on the particular needs and vulnerabilities of groups such as returnees and separated children, participants prepared and conducted role plays depicting the experiences they had made in their personal lives.

## 3. Evaluation

From WVS' perspective, this workshop was one of a series of trainings for youth and CWC members, so it was justifiable to devote about half of the available time to issues such as small arms control which are not part of the actual GoG project. In future workshops for civil and military authorities as well as community stakeholders, the focus will certainly shift towards reintegration-related aspects, away from small arms. However, GoG project staff participated in the workshop and they will be expected to use relevant and interesting information and methodologies on small arms and development in those subsequent workshops.



Figure 4: Host community sharing resources with returnees (role play)



Figure 5: Participants during group work

Both BICC and WVS placed great importance on giving the youth really an opportunity to articulate their reintegration needs and then figure out how to creatively address these using the means they have available to them. It was clear that the facilitators would need to focus their efforts on inspiring within those trained as much as possible the motivation and ideas to find local solutions to the problems they face in terms of small arms, youth reintegration, etc. The relief mentality is still very strong in South Sudan: the vast majority of the population continue to press NGOs and agencies to address their needs on their behalf. This is not sustainable and creates dependency, lethargy, lack of initiative, and "solutions" that are not appropriate to the context. In this training, WVS and BICC therefore tried to push participants to rely on themselves and help them find the pride of helping themselves and their communities.