'Let pikin bisniss be all men bisniss.'

'Let children's issues be everyone's issues.'

The psychosocial recovery of communities in post-war Sierra Leone.

Survey of War Child's programme in Sierra Leone

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Introduction

Armed conflicts are currently raging in more than thirty countries[1]. Worldwide, millions of children are growing up with the consequences of war. They are having to watch their houses being burned down, are witnessing or suffering violence, are having to flee and are losing many loved ones and friends. These are all experiences they will never forget.

Through its programmes in eleven countries, War Child is investing in a peaceful future for children who have been affected by war. Research is carried out regularly in order to continually improve the effectiveness of the programmes. This publication discusses the results of War Child's community-based programme in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone
Between 1991 and 2002, Sierra Leone was ravaged by a civil war which became infamous for atrocities such as the amputation of limbs and the deployment of an estimated 10,000 - 15,000 child soldiers[2]. Charles Taylor, the ex-president of Liberia, who is regarded as being responsible for the civil war in Sierra Leone, is currently on trial. One of the indictments against him concerns the deployment of child soldiers.

In Sierra Leone, War Child is working on improving the psychosocial wellbeing of children, and on empowering children and young people in rural villages. The goal is to build (or rebuild) peaceful communities which focus on the needs of children. Village elders, teachers, parents, other adults, children and young people jointly identify the problems that children have, and determine what is needed to solve them. Local action groups are being set up to organise and support this process. Recreational, creative, sporting, cultural and social activities are used to discuss all kinds of themes which range from the beating of children to drug use, learning new skills and new behaviour, and encouraging cooperation and initiatives.

Measuring the results of the War Child programme
By publishing this report, War Child's aim is to draw attention to the problems facing children in post-war Sierra Leone, to how War Child is working to alleviate these problems and to the results achieved via the programme. The results themselves are based on extensive research among 1,200 respondents from six communities[3].

Child soldiers as members of the community
After the war, a lot of former child soldiers returned to their homes. War Child decided not to initiate a separate programme for former child soldiers in the communities themselves. Because of their violent backgrounds, they are often quickly stigmatised and excluded for reasons of fear and distrust. Moreover, the experiences of numerous aid organisations in Sierra Leone have taught us that programmes aimed specifically at child soldiers often lead to jealousy and rejection because the 'perpetrators' become better off than the general population, who were the real victims. Participation in a programme involving the whole community is therefore the best way of ensuring that former child soldiers again become fully-valued members of society[4].

Structure of the report
The first chapter describes the conflict in Sierra Leone, the consequences for children and the role of child soldiers. Chapter 2 focuses on specific problems facing children in communities and the way in which the work performed by War Child brings about improvements. Chapter 3 describes how the results were measured, and the results themselves can be found in Chapter 4. The conclusions and recommendations for the programme in the future are included in Chapter 5.

Children on the front line

Michael (19) was a child solider in Sierra Leone. He was forced to fight with the rebels for four years. "I was selected to be a commander and, in the event of an attack, I had to tell the other children what to do. When we attacked, we (the children) were in the front. Sometimes we stabbed people with knives. I murdered so many people, I lost count. We had to take away the women who the rebels wanted to rape. If they didn't cooperate, they were threatened with death. If they still refused, they were shot dead. We were beaten as well. All we did was suffer."

Five years ago, Michael took part in the War Child programme. He recalls, "When we emerged from the jungle, the villagers ran away from us. They said we had murdered, broken property and done bad things. When War Child came to our village, they helped us re-establish contact with the people. As a result, the villagers were also encouraged to make contact with us."

1 War in Sierra Leone

Introduction

This chapter describes the consequences of the civil war in Sierra Leone, i.e. the consequences for children, the child soldiers and the communities.

The war

At the beginning of 1991, after many years of rule by a corrupt regime, the population of the poverty-stricken country of Sierra Leone was shocked to discover that a hundred or so Sierra Leonean and Liberian rebels were on their way to the diamond-rich province of Kono and were intent on seizing power. The rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fought government soldiers for control of the diamond mines. Diamonds were exchanged for weapons and the fighting spread.

Sierra Leone paid a heavy price for the civil war which ensued between 1991 and 2002. Of a population of 6 million people, it is estimated that there were 75,000 dead[5], 2 million refugees, 257,000 girls and women who were raped[6], 20,000 people who survived mutilation through amputation[7] and between 10,000 and 15,000 child soldiers[8]. When the war ended in 2002, there was not a great deal left of Sierra Leone. From an economic and social point of view, the country was completely broken and even today Sierra Leone is still the second-poorest country in the world.

Consequences for children

During the war, a lot of children witnessed horrific violence. They were systematically abused, lost family members, saw their houses go up in flames and had to flee. Eleven years of violence seriously disrupted the development of the generations of children and young people who have been affected. The 340,000 war orphans in Sierra Leone are particularly vulnerable. If they are adopted by family members, they are often not treated as members of the family and are sometimes even ill-treated and abused. They are discriminated against and often used as scape-goats for any problems that might arise. Another disturbing fact is that 72% of the children aged between five and fourteen engage in paid or unpaid work. This was revealed in a study by the International Confederation of Trade Unions[9]. According to the researchers, several thousand children work for a pittance in miserable conditions in the diamond mines. A lot of these children are former child soldiers. It has also come to light that a lot of girls are being held captive as slaves and are being forced into prostitution.

Child soldiers

During the war, huge numbers of children were abducted, primarily by the rebels, but also by the regular army. Between ten and fifteen thousand children were forced – often under the influence of drugs – to fight as soldiers, serve as sex slaves, work in the diamond mines, carry goods and perform household tasks in the camps in the jungle. Murder, mutilation, rape and other atrocities were an everyday part of these children's lives. The war brought them face-to-face at any early age with the excrescences of human barbarity.

Girls who are ex-child soldiers are even more vulnerable. The fact that they have been sexually abused makes it difficult for them to find a husband and regain their place in society. Often they have not taken part in a reintegration programme because they were afraid of owning up to being ex-child soldiers. Their fragile position means they run a serious risk of being abused and exploited again.

Wherever this report refers to ex-child soldiers in Sierra Leone, this means all the children who were minors during the war and belonged to an armed group. A lot of ex-child soldiers turned 18 during the course of the eleven year war. Although they are, in a strict sense, adults, they still spent some of their youth in camps in the jungle. There, instead of learning to read and write, they were taught how to fight.

Problems reintegrating into society

After the war, most ex-child soldiers took part in re-integration programmes lasting a number of months. Most of the young people then left for the cities. The underage children largely returned to their communities. Some managed to find their feet again. Others found (and are still finding) it difficult to pick up their lives again because of their past. They feel guilty about what they have done, even though most were given no choice. They do their best to forget the awful memories but are nevertheless confronted with feelings of fear, rage and sorrow. An additional problem is that the villages generally offer them very few prospects. The war left a lot of communities without schools and teachers.

Ex-child soldiers also have problems adapting socially. While they were with the armed groups, they learned to despise civil authority and achieve their aims through aggressive behaviour. The many arguments and fights and the lack of respect for village chiefs and elders make these young people unpopular in the communities they return to. However, the communities also contribute unintentionally to their negative role by stigmatising them and by excluding the children and young people due to fear and ignorance about their past. It is important to take action in order to prevent ex-child soldiers who do not successfully reintegrate into society after the war from becoming a risk to peace in the region. The chance is that they will again take up arms. Conflicts in neighbouring countries have, for example, already resulted in the re-recruitment of former child soldiers. A number of former fighters from Sierra Leone revealed in a Human Rights Watch report that they had been asked to take part in 'combat missions' in Ivory Coast and Guinea. If these young people do not find a place in society, there is a real risk that the cycle of violence in the region will continue. It is therefore crucial to act so that these young people can start playing a positive role in society.

Consequences for communities

When the hundreds of thousands of refugees returned home from camps after the war, they encountered a fragmented and disrupted society. This was not only due to the burned-out houses and fields or the demolished schools, roads and wells. The country was also socially disrupted. The violence had caused people to lose trust in each other. Community leaders had been murdered and people had lost many of their loved ones. Residents had fled and had stayed away for years. Ex-soldiers and ex-rebels returned home to their villages. Social links and cultural values, which normally ensure social cohesion, had disappeared. The years of war had created aggressive and violent forms of behaviour. The lengthy war had also robbed a lot of people of their desire to take any initiative.

The War Child programme is improving contacts between parents and children. As one adult explains, "Children are learning to greet adults properly and this is helping them to respect and maintain our culture. The fact that the children are showing respect for their elders means the latter are, in turn, prepared to respect the needs of the children. For example, the village chief is now ensuring that light is provided in the evenings so that children are able to study."

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N.B. The children in the stories are not the children in the photographs.

2 The War Child programme: the psychosocial recovery of communities

Introduction
Shortly after the war, War Child provided psychosocial assistance to children in refugee camps. When most refugees from the camps returned to their rural communities (villages consisting mostly of a centre and a few surrounding satellite villages), War Child decided to continue providing assistance in these communities with the focus being on the provinces that had been seriously affected by the war and where the children were most in need of support. This chapter examines the goal of the programme, the method of working, the position of child soldiers in the programme and the programme's scope.

Objective of the War Child programme
War Child's work in Sierra Leone is aimed at improving the psychosocial wellbeing of children, and at empowering children and young people via a programme which involves the whole community. A child's environment is crucial to his or her healthy psychosocial development. A harmonious community, in which they receive support from adults and their peers, where they attend school, where their opinion counts and where they can participate in community activities, allows children to grow into balanced adults in spite of poverty and a violent past. Children who acquire this kind of resilience are more confident and are able to use their inner strength and the support from those around them to deal with situations that arise in everyday life.

Method of working
At the start of the programme, War Child invites representatives from all levels of the community to meetings during which they are able to express their own ideas about what problems the children and young people are facing. The children and young people are, of course, also involved in the meetings. Participation in games is used to analyse

the most important problems, with the following subjects being referred to on a regular basis:
• A lack of support from adults for their children because they themselves have numerous problems as a result of the conflict;
• The violation of children's rights such as the right to protection, the right to participation (for example having one's own viewpoint, taking part in decision-making and being listened to), the right to education and all children's right to be treated equally;
• A lack of unity in the communities and a lot of negative interaction between community members (arguments, fights);
• The negative influences of peers (lots of arguments and cursing among the young people themselves, spurring each other on to drink, use drugs, gamble, smoke, steal, and sexually abuse others);
• A lack of education and future prospects.

Once the problems have been identified, the children and young people, tribal chiefs, teachers, parents and other adults decide jointly what needs to be done to tackle them. War Child then invites the children, young people and adults to form local groups. Before the war, there were lots of local groups active in Sierra Leone. Now a number of Community Action Groups are being set up for each community. Sometimes these are existing groups which are made responsible for organising cultural, social, recreational, creative, sporting and awareness activities to bring together the various groups in the community. People are encouraged to cooperate and take initiative. Moreover, all kinds of themes are discussed, ranging from child labour to drug abuse. The group members, the participants and the public learn new skills and new behaviours. For example, parents change the times that children have to work on the land so that they can attend school, or they make sure the children do not have to do

any of the heavy work. The participants also learn, for example, to listen to each other and to solve problems by talking about them.

In addition to the Community Action Groups, the programme also involves the setting up of another group known as the Child and Youth Support Structure. This group coordinates the entire programme and is the community's central point of contact. This approach allows the community to develop and implement the programme itself. War Child supervises and extensively trains these groups so that they learn to operate independently, and remain active over a long period of time. War Child works in such a community for two years, after which the groups continue to operate by themselves.

Child soldiers in the community
In the communities in which War Child works, huge problems are caused by young people who hang around aimlessly, behave aggressively, show no respect for older people and use drugs. Some of these young people were once child soldiers. It is estimated that a community of around three thousand residents will include around fifteen ex-child soldiers[10].

War Child has chosen not to set up separate programmes for former child soldiers in the communities. Their violent pasts mean they are quickly stigmatised and excluded because of fear and distrust. Moreover, the experience of various aid organisations in Sierra Leone is that programmes specifically aimed at child soldiers often lead to jealousy and rejection because the 'perpetrators' become better off than the general population, who are the real victims. Participation in a programme involving the whole community is therefore the best way of ensuring that former child soldiers again become full members of society. The joint activities bring ex-child soldiers and their

peers, young and old, 'perpetrators' and victims back into contact with each other, restoring mutual trust and respect and giving everyone the chance to make a positive contribution to their community. Young people help to organise events, they are able to develop and display their cultural and sporting talents, and their opinion is asked when determining and dealing with matters which affect them personally. They learn to respect older people and the authorities again, and earn respect themselves in their new role. During the course of the programme, the number of arguments and fights decreases and the level of cooperation increases. Having something meaningful to do and acquiring a proper place in society are two important ways of ensuring long-term, successful reintegration. By increasing social cohesion in communities, War Child encourages people to take initiative, be enthusiastic, care for each other, show respect and interact positively. In a strong community, all the children and young people, whether ex-child soldiers or not, are able to work together towards a better future.

Scope of the War Child programme
In 2003 and 2004, War Child started its community-based programme in 19 villages in the districts of Western Area, Port Loko and Bombali. In 2005, the programme was initiated in 20 new communities in the same three districts. In 2006, the programme was continued in these 20 communities and 14 new communities were added. The work area was expanded to include a fourth district, namely Bo. In 2006, a total of 33,593 children and young people and 13,434 adults participated intensively in the programme. A further 41,051 children and young people and 11,914 adults were involved in the community activities as participants and observers. War Child is currently working in 22 communities (14 from 2006 and 8 new ones) in Port Loko, Bombali and Bo. In total, War Child has worked to date in 61 communities.

Know-how passed on from mother to daughter

In Sierra Leone, War Child is working on building peaceful communities with special attention for children. A child explains what difference that can make. "Adults now pass on their knowledge to us. They not only teach us how to play the Boo-Boo flute and how to drum, but also how to get a group together and then lead it. Children and young people are now very much involved in planning and carrying out community activities."

3 Design and survey methods

Introduction
War Child has measured the extent to which the objectives of the programme in Sierra Leone have been achieved. This survey is important for the continued improvement of the quality and effectiveness of the programme. This chapter describes the methodological design and survey methods. The full description of the survey, 'Let pikin bisniss be all men bisniss,' Research Paper, Community based Psychosocial Programme, War Child, Sierra Leone 2005 - 2006, is available at www.warchild.nl.

Design
Six of the twenty communities from 2005 were selected for the survey with an average of 2,350 residents per community. A random sample of 200 people (8.5%) was selected from each community for participation in the research. Equal numbers of children/young people and adults were selected, with the same number of men/boys as women/girls.

Three measurements
Prior to the start of the programme (at the beginning of 2005) and one year into the programme (at the end of 2005), the same standardised questionnaire was given out, which comprised both closed and open questions. Comparing these two measurements makes it possible to establish whether any significant changes had occurred. At the end of 2006, when the two-year programme had been completed, a third measurement was carried out using focus group discussions (discussions with groups of children and adults, each comprising around fifteen participants). This third measurement involved a re-examination of the most important subjects among some of the members of the same target group[11]. This produced additional quality information which could be used to illustrate and add depth to the previously acquired results. The quotes by adults and children in this report were collected during these focus group discussions.

Selection of the participants and representativeness
The fact that there are no lists of names of all the residents of the various communities means that no random sample could be taken. Participants were therefore selected with the help of key figures in the village. The sample is so large (8.5%)[12] that there is a good chance of representative results. A careful selection and the large number of participants and communities means we can assume that the results of the research are representative for all members of the communities researched.

Questionnaire
The questions were drawn up in English and translated into Krio and Temne. Local social workers checked whether the questions were clear and suitable for the local culture. All the participants answered the same questions. Where necessary, the questions were formulated using simple language for children and young people. All the questions were drawn up in the participants' mother tongue.

Conducting the research
Twenty experienced local War Child social workers arranged for the participants to fill in the questionnaires after having attended a training session in interviewing skills and discussion techniques. These workers also played a key role in finding and tracing the participants for the second and third measurement. 83% of the first sample of participants took part in the second measurement. This percentage is high for this kind of research, and increases the representativeness of the results.

Communication with the participants
The goal of the research and the method of working were explained to all participants beforehand. The participants were also told that the research data were to be collected on a voluntary basis, that no payment would be available and that the research would not be linked to any decision regarding the continuation of War Child support to the community. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

Aggression in communities

Aggression was an important subject for discussion during the activities in the communities. In theatrical performances, children, young people and adults played out situations from their daily lives. The performances were followed by public debates.

During the focus group discussions, which were held in connection with results measured, one parent said, "After the war there was no longer any harmony in the communities. Neighbours fought with each other over land and the communities no longer had any rules or laws. Leadership conflicts and arguments occurred frequently and there was a complete lack of unity." Another parent expressed, "The war has made our people violent. Children and young people stopped going to school and started playing in the jungle instead, fighting each other with sticks and bottles. No-one had any control over them. Adults were not aware of the negative effects of the situation. Parents also set a bad example for their children by fighting each other on almost a daily basis while their children were present. Teachers also beat children at school."

4   Results of the research

Introduction

When drawing up the programme in Sierra Leone, War Child formulated five indicators for success. These indicators provide information on the extent to which the community contributes to the healthy psychosocial development of children and young people. The higher the indicator scores, the better the conditions for the healthy development of children and young people in the community. The research involved establishing how often the research participants referred to improvements that related to these indicators. The higher the score, the more successful the programme.[13]

Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.5 of this chapter discuss the results attained per indicator. Finally, paragraph 4.6 reflects on the opinions of the residents regarding the objective of the War Child programme, and the greatest changes they have noticed.

The indicators measured are:

1 The extent to which community members observe psychosocial problems and needs among children and young people;
2 The degree of support adults and peers provide to children and young people;
3 The extent to which children and young people are able to spend time playing, and the degree of participation in social and recreational/creative community activities;
4 The extent to which children and adults are aware of children's rights;
5 The degree of positive communication and interaction between children and adults.

The indicators were measured at three points in time: before the start of the programme (at the beginning of 2005), after the first year of the programme (at the end of 2005) and at the end of the programme (at the end of 2006).

Child soldiers

Together with other children, young people and adults, former child soldiers take part in the activities which make up the community-based programme (see chapter 2, page 15). As a result, this research did not include questions which were specifically applicable to child soldiers. The results of the programme are important for the community as a whole, including the former child soldiers.

4.1 The extent to which community members observe psychosocial problems and needs among children and young people

If people are aware of the psychosocial needs and problems of children and young people, understand how they arise and learn how to deal with them, this can be a first step along the road to change. That is why information is provided in the communities on the psychosocial problems facing children and young people. This survey included an analysis of which problems the community members referred to and how often. It was therefore possible to examine the extent to which a certain problem occurred, and whether the adults and children believe that these problems improved or worsened during the course of the programme.

Results

The researchers asked children whether they, or children they know, ever suffer from psychosocial or other problems[14]. The children were able to choose from a list of various kinds of problems. A year after the start of the programme, the children referred to three problems a lot less frequently as problems than at the beginning. These

were a lack of respect between children and older people (from 76% to 41%), aggression (from 75% to 56%) and marrying at a young age (from 76% to 57%).

The total number of problems that children referred to also decreased from 5 to 4. This means that, in the view of the children, the number of problems that they themselves, or others they knew, experienced decreased during the first year of the programme. School drop-out rates was the problem most frequently referred to. Both the first and the second measurement showed that 80% of the children referred to this as a problem and that, in their opinion, the situation had not improved. The conclusion to this report briefly examines the role of education in the War Child programme.

Adults also referred most frequently to school drop-out rates as a problem in the community, although they believed that the extent of the problem seemed to decrease during the course of the programme (91% during the first measurement and 76% during the second measurement). Other problems which both the adults and the children referred to less after a year of the programme included difficult relations between children and their parents/guardians (from 80% to 32%), aggression (from 64% to 45%) and marrying at a young age (from 65% to 45%). The number of problems that adults referred to dropped from 6 during the first measurement to 4 during the second measurement. From this we can conclude that the number of problems that children experience decreased in the opinion of the adults.

4.2 The degree of support from adults and peers for children and young people

If children experience problems, it makes a considerable difference whether they are supported by adults and

peers. That is why information on this issue was provided in the programme. Children and adults were asked what kind of support might help children, and which kind of support they actually receive.

Results

The percentage of children that answered "nothing can help me" decreased from 15% to 0.2%. These children became aware of the fact that support was indeed available. Children indicated that they most needed support from parents to cope with psychosocial problems (rose from 75% to 92%). It also transpired that children became more aware of the possibility of receiving support from peers or of providing support to them (rose from 26% to 64%). Adults also referred to support from peers more often as a way in which children could cope with problems. During the first measurement, 31% of the adults regarded support from peers as being useful, with this rising to 51% during the second measurement. The awareness of the usefulness of support from peers therefore increased considerably, among both adults and children.

Actual support

The research revealed that the extent to which children actually felt supported by their parents during the first measurement was fairly high and increased even further[15]. Of the children interviewed, 83% in the first measurement and 96% in the second measurement said that they could turn to their parents for support. The adults also indicated that children could turn to them for help (rose from 91% to 99%).

It's not my child anyway

In post-war communities, parents have little time for children because they often have to cope with all kinds of problems themselves. A child describes the situation in the communities before the start of the War Child programme. "In times gone by, our parents did not protect us. If adults saw children going to dangerous places, like into the jungle, they would only laugh. Their attitude was one of 'I don't care. After all, it's not my child'. This was even the case when they saw children who needed help. Parents did not look out for their children, and certainly not for children who were not their biological children. Things are different now, because parents are showing that they care about us."

Local groups use theatrical performances to draw attention to themes such as support from parents. As an adult explains, "I saw a performance in which parents did not encourage or support their child at home. The child was neglected and died after an accident because no-one was paying attention. After I had seen this play, I decided to start building up a better relationship with my children and support them as much as I can."

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In addition, children indicated more frequently that they could approach their teachers with problems (an increase from 34% to 68%) and their friends (an increase from 15% to 63%). Nevertheless, in response to another question asked a year into the programme, children still only said that they felt 'a little' supported by peers and teachers. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = not, 2 = a little, 3 = enough, 4 = a lot), the level of support from teachers rose from 2.2 to 2.5 and the amount of support from friends from 1.9 to 2.3. These results show that the degree of social support for children is still limited, particularly the support from friends and teachers. Nevertheless, the children do feel that support is increasing.

Adults indicated that the amount of time they make available for their children increased during the first year of the programme. The percentage of adults that stated that they were unable to make sufficient time for their children dropped from 39% to 12%. Adults also indicated that they are more able to help children with problems (rose from 78% to 95%). The reasons given for not being able to provide optimum support for children were poverty (particularly in single-parent families and large polygamous families), no time due to work, setting a poor example oneself, and arguments in the family.

4.3 The extent to which children and young people are able to spend time playing, and the degree of participation in social and recreational/creative community activities

Playing is important for children, not only so that they can have fun and enjoy being a child, but also to develop properly from a psychological and social point of view. As a feature of the programme, and in collaboration with the local groups in each community, War Child has had playgrounds built, and resources for play have been manufactured and purchased for various recreational activities. In addition, the Community Action Groups (see Chapter 2) have organised a wide range of cultural, social and recreational activities for children to take part in. The actual access to playgrounds and play resources and the participation in activities are important indicators for measuring whether children are actually being given opportunities to play. The results are discussed below.

Playgrounds and resources for play

Around 80% of the children and adults indicated, during both the first and the second measurement, that spaces are available for children to play, primarily at home and in the street. Evidently, there was no lack of areas for children to play in at the start of the programme. However, the third measurement revealed that some places were unsafe, such as the jungle outside the villages.

During the third measurement, adults cited reasons that prevented them from allowing children to play in the past. These were primarily safety reasons, such as the risk that girls ran of being raped or of engaging in sexual contacts at an early age, as was known to occur during hide-and-seek. Another reason referred to was the lack of resources for play and safe play areas.

According to the adults, playgrounds and play resources which were realised with support from War Child have contributed to better and safer play opportunities. Parents now encourage their children to play. Shy, solitary and isolated children in particular are being encouraged by their parents, members of the community groups and older people from the community.

Children's participation in community activities

The researchers asked children and adults to list community activities and to say whether they took part in them or not. Adults and children mentioned the same kinds of activities, namely dance, games, sport, cultural and religious activities. Adults and children answered during the first and second measurements that they regularly took part in these kinds of activities. The children themselves stated that participation rose from 75% to 91% during the first year of the programme. The number of children that did not take part decreased from 11% to 3%. The percentage of adults that thought that children regularly took part in community activities rose from 93% to 100%. It can be concluded that the participation of children in community activities was already at a high level at the beginning of the programme and had risen to an even higher level after a year, to more than 90%.

Participating in activities

On the subject of their participation in community life, the children said, "We are allowed to do Boo-Boo (playing the bamboo flute) and Tefaya (traditional dancing) and join in large meetings and help keep the village clean. Now that there are enough resources for these activities, a lot of people come to watch and take part. Our parents let us play an active role because now these activities take place without any arguments or fighting."

4.4 The degree of awareness of children's rights among children and adults

Children's rights are important because they cover the basic needs of every child. If these needs are not fulfilled, a child cannot develop and grow up healthily. With a view to informing adults and children and to making them aware of children's rights, the Community Action Groups (see Chapter 2) organised awareness activities in the community. Issues such as child labour were raised using methods such as theatrical performances, which were followed by open public debates. This research measured the extent to which children and adults are aware of children's rights, and also examined whether this awareness has had a positive effect on their behaviour.

Results

In the first year of the War Child programme, the awareness of children's rights among both adults and children rose considerably, a fact indicated by a number of different outcomes. For example, the percentage of children who had heard of children's rights grew considerably, from 40% to 95% and the percentage of adults from 60% to 97%.

Table 1: Have you ever heard of children's rights? (% yes)

	Start of 2005	End of 2005
Children	40%	95%
Adults	60%	97%

Children and adults who had heard of children's rights were asked to mention examples of children's rights spontaneously, i.e. without using any preformulated answers. The number of rights that children were able to list rose from 2.7 to 3.4 and, in the case of adults, from 2.8 to 3.8. These increases confirm the outcome that the level of awareness of children's rights among adults and children has increased.

Children are the lights of the community

An adult responds enthusiastically to children's right to an education. "Education leads to development. It is the key to success. Education 'enlightens'. If a child has been educated, s/he becomes a light for the community. I am happy that this right to education exists because children now take exams and are becoming smarter. Now that my child receives a grant to attend school, she can express herself much better and play a significant role in our community in the future."

More awareness of various rights

The right to attend school and the right to play were known to a large percentage of the children who had heard of children's rights at all. During the first measurement, 80% of the 40% who had heard of children's rights referred to these rights, and during the second measurement they were referred to by 80% of the 95% who had heard of children's rights. Among the children who were aware of children's rights, the level of awareness of the right to food, the right to expression and to support from adults rose (from 21% to 40%, from 15% to 26% and from 13% to 27% respectively). During the second measurement, adults who were aware of children's rights referred to the right to food more often (a rise from 27% to 46%), the right to play (a rise from 31% to 75%), the right to shelter (a rise from 5% to 26%) and the right to expression (a rise from 12% to 33%). The right to attend school is also a well-known right among adults (a rise from 86% to 91%).

Table 2: Rights showing the highest level of increased awareness among children and adults who indicated that they had heard of children's rights (see Table 1 for the percentages)

	Start of 2005	End of 2005
Children		
Right to food	21%	40%
Right to expression	15%	26%
Right to support from adults	13%	27%
Adults		
Right to food	27%	46%
Right to play	31%	75%
Right to shelter	5%	26%
Right to expression	12%	33%

What rights do children have?

Awareness of these rights was also measured using a preformulated list of rights. These rights were read out to children and adults, who were then asked to reflect on whether children had the rights or not. The most striking outcome was the increase relating to the right to expression (the right to express oneself and have an opinion) from 51% to 89% among children and from 68% to 96% among adults. This outcome is confirmed by the results in paragraph 4.5 on communication and interaction between adults and children.

From awareness to a change in behaviour

The focus group discussions revealed that a lot has changed in children's daily lives in respect of children's rights. Previously, children were not allowed to express an opinion during family or community meetings. Now parents allow their children to express their views. The support that parents give to their children has also increased.

What has changed for me?

As a child explains, "Adults now encourage us to express our ideas and we are allowed to voice our opinions. As a result, I now feel I am a proper member of my family and of my community. And I am no longer afraid to talk in public or with other children."

As a parent explains, "We, the adults, have attended meetings on supporting our children. We have learned that if we support our children, we help to develop our family, our home base, our community and our country. Children are our future leaders. They have to be able to develop properly in order to be good people in the future. People now want to work on supporting their children, and parents are even taking out loans to send their children to school and to ensure that they receive medical care."

4.5 The degree of positive communication and interaction between children and adults

Post-war communities in Sierra Leone are characterised by a lot of domestic violence, arguments and fights. Fear, distrust and enmity continue to play a visible role in relations long after the war has ended. The challenge is therefore to encourage people involved in this culture of violence to talk to each other, to listen to each other, to respect each other and live in peace with one another.

The creation of a positive attitude in the communities is therefore one of the objectives the War Child programme. If people of various ages and backgrounds participate together in cultural, social, sporting and recreational events, they will learn to interact with each other constructively in an enthusiastic atmosphere. Allowing children, teenagers, young adults and older people to organise the activities together in the Community Action Groups (see Chapter 2) gives them the opportunity to exchange ideas, to listen to each other and to cooperate. The results relating to positive communication and interaction are discussed below.

Talking, listening and respectful interaction[16]

During the second measurement, the researchers asked children and adults whether they talked with each other and listened to one another. Both the children (87%) and the adults (97%) indicated that their communication had improved and that, after the first year of the programme, they were able to talk and listen to each other properly[17]. As an example of the change, 51% of the children and 65% of the adults referred to "more opportunities for children to express their ideas". This was highlighted in the focus group discussions.

Respect

No fewer than 90% of the adults and children have noticed improvements since the start of the programme as regards the level of respect between children and adults. During the second measurement, children and adults referred to the extent to which they respect each other as "good".[18] Children and adults indicated that children are now obedient and that adults have become friendlier and more supportive towards children. Further examples of changes referred to by adults and children are shown in Table 3. The percentages indicate how often children and adults referred to the change in question.

Children are given a voice

The following quote reflects the opinion of a lot of adults in the communities studied regarding the participation of children in decision-making, "In today's world, we ought to ask children and young people for their opinions. By involving children, we prepare them for the world of tomorrow. By involving children in activities, they learn skills such as how to speak before a group and express their opinion, and how to solve problems by discussing them."

Table 3: Examples of changes relating to respect between adults and children

	Children	Adults
Children respect and are obedient to adults (older people/parents): They talk respectfully, listen to advice, listen to each other, say hello	47%	56%
Time for play and community activities are organised and carried out on the basis of cooperation: organise activities, play, peaceful interaction/participation, lead meetings, make decisions regarding play areas, unity in the community, participation in meetings	24%	17%
Adults respect children: respect for the views and rights of children, no hitting, no shouting at children, politeness	19%	40%
Children talk with adults/parents: children are involved in decisions in their community, children respect themselves	32%	11%
Children's behaviour: less aggression, no more obstinate children, politeness, no drugs, no shouting, fewer conflicts	19%	13%
Support from adults: encouragement, discussions with and advice for children, protection for children	11%	12%
Work: help in the home, trading, selling, fetching water, doing shopping	10%	3%
School: going to school, going to school happy	3%	2%
Average number of examples referred to	1.66	1.65

Children's involvement in decision-making

In order to gain a greater insight into the extent to which the communication between adults and children has improved, the researchers asked them whether adults listen to the views of children and young people in connection with issues which are important in their daily lives. The results show that children's involvement in decision-making has increased considerably. Whereas children never used to be involved, both adults and children stated that children were being involved more often just a year after the programme had started[19].

Issues on which children have views relate primarily to school, children's tasks which they carry out to help their families, and a say in when they are allowed to play. The results of all the measurements show that it is quite normal to involve children in decisions on marriage, circumcision, family matters or conflicts in the community.

Listening to children

"Children and young people now play an active role in almost all meetings with the community. We listen to them. They sometimes have more of a feeling for certain issues than adults. They are invited to attend meetings and their views are heard and taken into account during the decision-making", an adult explains.

4.6 Perceived aim and effect of War Child's community-based programme

During the second and third measurement, one of the questions related to what adults and children believe the aim and effect of the War Child programme to be.

Perceived aim of the programme

It was obvious that people have a clear idea of the objective of War Child's community-based programme. All the respondents were able to include a relevant aim. On average, each person referred to 1.5 objectives. The following were the most common answers.

- 52% of the children and 44% of the adults gave an answer that had to do with play and community activities (improve wellbeing through play, playing together, involve people in activities, play safe, have fun).
- 35% of the children and 38% of the adults gave an answer that had to do with improving wellbeing (bringing happiness, reducing stress, reflecting on your attitude, discussing on issues, exposing problems, helping children, healing broken hearts, making sure that children respect each other).
- Lastly, 27% of the children and 36% of the adults gave answers relating to peace: unity, interacting peacefully with each other, no violence or arguments, bringing people together, living peacefully, talking with the community, changing attitudes.

Perceived effect of the programme

One year after the start of the programme, 99% of the adults and the children indicated that they were aware of the War Child programme and 97% said that changes had taken place in the community. In response to the request to list some recent changes, people referred on average to one or two changes. Approximately half of the adults and children referred to changes relating to harmony and improved interaction in communities. Half also referred to the participation of children in play and community activities. Increased support within the family, improved behaviour by young people and increased school attendance were also named, albeit less so. Examples are described in the following table:

Dancing in the villages

One of the parents gives an example of the improved harmony in the communities: "There is now more cohesion in our community because we have come together and have started organising cultural festivals. Village A comes to village B because we organise festivals in turn. Nowadays, residents of nearby villages are friendly towards us, the residents of the main village. In contrast to how things used to be, when such cultural dance activities were characterised by violence, they now end peacefully."

A young person explains why he considers respect to be important: "If we act respectfully, the people in our community know that we are being properly brought up. Our parents can then be proud of us, and we are asked to take part in community activities. This generates peace and unity, not only in the family, but in the community as well. We have a saying: 'If children wash their hands, they can eat at the village chief's table.'"

Table 4: Examples of changes in the community

	Children	Adults
Play opportunities for children: play resources, a safe playground, being together, children have positive contact with each other, young people express their emotions, children live happily and freely.	56%	48%
Harmony in communities: awareness of children's rights, meetings, interaction between adults/young people/children, women are involved, peaceful coexistence, support from adults, fewer rapes and abductions, cultural activities, communities come together, contacts between villages.	51%	55%
Family support: parents listen to their children, ask their opinions. Parents take care of us, parents do not hit us any more, less domestic violence, participation in decision-making, food, parents take care of their children's basic needs.	28%	16%
Good behaviour by young people: less drug-taking, less gambling, listening, no swear words, less fighting, respect for adults, asking parents' permission, less alcohol.	19%	13%
Going to school: more children/young people attend school, more girls attend school even after pregnancy.	18%	12%
Child labour: less child labour.	8%	3%
Marrying at an early age: less marrying at an early age and fewer pregnancies.	4%	1%
Average number of examples referred to.	1.8	1.5

At the end of the two-year programme, the researchers asked adults and children what they considered to be the greatest change in their community. Most of the answers were related to increased harmony in the communities. The decrease in aggression (paragraph 4.1) and the improved communication and respect (paragraph 4.5) are clear reflections of this. Examples of improved harmony are included in table 5.

Table 5: Examples of improved harmony, the greatest change in the community

- Children from different villages have contact with each other and can express their culture.
- Peace and harmony between children, young people and adults.
- More women take part in meetings, women express their opinions more often
- Meetings have ensured that our attitude towards our children and women has changed and improved. There is now more communication within families.
- "We find it easy to mobilise people from villages in the neighbourhood. This was not always the case but now, thanks to War Child, interesting meetings are organised on a regular basis."
- Respect between authorities and people from the community. They take part in training courses and interact properly with each other.
- Adults now invite children to meetings.
- Children have acquired more talent as regards football and cultural activities.
- Parents help their children so that they can go to school.

Playing an active role in the kids club

"A twelve-year-old boy in this community was always in trouble and was a drug user. Now he plays an active role in the kids club and takes part in various community activities and training courses. These have helped him to improve his behaviour and he has stopped using drugs."

5 Conclusions of the research and recommendations for future research

The results of War Child's programme in Sierra Leone have been measured on the basis of five indicators (see Chapter 4). The following is a summary of the most important conclusions and recommendations which this research has generated. The full text of the conclusions is included in the research paper 'Let pikin bisniss be all men bisniss'. Survey Community based Psychosocial programme War Child Sierra Leone 2005 - 2006. The paper can be downloaded from www.warchild.nl.

Children's rights, support, participation and expression

The awareness of children's rights has increased considerably. This is the most important and most obvious result of the programme. The vast majority of the members of the community were very aware of children's rights by the end of the programme. There are also indications that this has led to positive change in the behaviour of adults. Children feel they are being supported more and are allowed to participate in meetings and in activities more often. They are allowed to express themselves, and their views are being heard. These are all important factors for empowering children and young people. These results show that the community-based programme helps to empower children.

Greater harmony, positive communication, respect

Various research results show that the level of harmony in the communities has improved. There is now more positive communication and respectful interaction between children and adults, who also report a drop in aggressive behaviour. These results are confirmed by the fact that more than half the adults and children regard "the increase in the degree of harmony within the community" as being the biggest change to have taken place as a result of the War Child programme. On the basis of these results, we can conclude that the programme has helped to rebuild peaceful communities.

Contradictory results on play opportunities

Even before the start of the programme, children already had sufficient areas in which to play, and they were already taking part in community activities on a regular basis. This did not increase by any significant degree during the course of the programme. This outcome gives cause to question whether activities oriented around this issue were actually necessary, although a number of comments need to be made before this question is answered.

First of all, the presence of play areas does not say anything about their safety. Moreover, no survey has actually been carried out on the extent to which adults give their children permission to play. Neither is it known whether the respondents in the first measurement meant the same as those in the second measurement when they replied "regular participation". Elsewhere, the survey in fact reveals that the respondents indeed thought there had been a considerable increase in children's play opportunities. They referred to this as one of the most significant changes brought about by the programme. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which play opportunities for children are limited, and which activities are most suited to improving the situation.

Lack of schooling and school drop-out rates

Adults and children consider school drop-out rates to be a major problem, and one that generally does not appear to have decreased by any significant degree, although this is to be expected due to the increased awareness as regards children's rights (including the right to education). In 2005, War Child carried out additional, specific assessments into the need for education in the communities, and an education pilot project[20] was started in eight communities.

Contradictory results regarding support from parents; increase in support from teachers and peers

The research results relating to support from parents, teachers and peers can be interpreted in several ways. The extent to which children feel supported by their parents was already reasonably high before the start of the programme. However, this contradicts the outcomes of other participatory needs assessments performed outside the scope of this research. These discussions in fact reveal that the lack of parental support is one of the greatest problems in the villages. Further research is required to analyse the level of parental support in greater detail.

The War Child programme has helped children to become more aware of the fact that they can get support from teachers and their peers. Children asked for support from their teachers more frequently, and more parents acknowledged the supporting role played by teachers. Although children also stated that they were getting more support from their peers, at the same time they said that the peer support they receive is still limited.

Child soldiers in the community

It is to be expected that the results apply to a large section of the community, including the former child soldiers. In a harmonious environment in which people respect one another and in which people talk and listen to each other, in which children and young people are allowed to have a say and express themselves in sport, music and dance, former child soldiers also have increasing opportunities to leave their pasts behind them and to build towards a new, peaceful future.

5.2 Limitations and valuable lessons from this survey

Around the world, scientific research into the effect of psychosocial support programmes is still in its infancy. Moreover, there is still a lack of standardised instruments which can be used in a non-western context. War Child regularly carries out research to establish the effectiveness of the programmes and to improve them. However, performing such research is hampered by a number of limitations. These are listed below with a view to ensuring that the survey results are properly interpreted.

It cannot be proven conclusively that improvements in the communities can be exclusively attributed to the War Child programme because it was impossible, for ethical and practical reasons, to have communities participate in the research as control groups. Although the idea of there being a relationship between the effects found and the War Child intervention can be regarded as plausible, the influence of other factors cannot be excluded.

No random sample could be taken because there are no lists of names of all the communities' residents. As a result, we cannot simply assume that the results of the research are representative for all communities. However, we can assume that the results are representative for all the members of the six communities in which the research took place.

Interviewing people who are involved (to a greater or lesser extent) in the War Child programme always entails a certain risk of provoking socially desirable answers. These technical research limitations oblige us to interpret the results with caution.

Valuable lessons

The outcomes of this survey will enable War Child to improve the content of the community-based programme. There are also a number of points relating to the execution of this type of research, we can learn from. These are referred to in the full research report at www.warchild.nl. Lastly, the research also contributes to the development of an effective instrument to measure the impact of interventions on psychosocial well being in (post)conflict areas.

No more hitting

"Now that there is more peace in the communities and adults are no longer each other's enemies, they are able to pay more attention to children, whether these are their own biological children or not. Neighbours help children when they are ill by taking them to hospital, even if the parents are not around. And our parents no longer hit us now that the message has been spread about maltreating children and children's rights."

Summary

Between 1991 and 2002, Sierra Leone was ravaged by a civil war which became infamous for atrocities such as the amputation of limbs and the deployment of an estimated 10,000 - 15,000 child soldiers. When the hundreds of thousands of refugees returned home from camps after the war, they encountered a fragmented and disrupted society. Communities were also socially disrupted. A lot of people had been murdered or had been away for years. The cultural values and social structure, which normally ensure social cohesion, had disappeared. People had lost trust in each other and violence had become a normal way for people to interact. The lengthy war had also robbed a lot of people of their desire to take any initiative.

War Child Programme

Since 2003, War Child has been working in 61 rural villages in Sierra Leone on the recovery of peaceful communities where there is a focus on the needs of children. The aim is to improve their psychosocial wellbeing and to empower children and young people. Tribal chiefs, teachers, parents, other adults, children and young people jointly define the problems children have and what needs to be done to tackle them. Community action groups are set up to organise and support this work. Recreational, creative, sporting, cultural and social activities are used to broach all kinds of subjects ranging from child labour to drug use, new skills and new behaviour are learned, and cooperation and initiatives are encouraged.

Child soldiers

War Child decided not to initiate a separate programme for former child soldiers in the communities themselves. Their violent backgrounds often quickly result in them being stigmatised and excluded for reasons of fear and distrust. Moreover, the experiences of numerous aid organisations in Sierra Leone has taught us that programmes aimed specifically at child soldiers often cause jealousy and rejection because the "perpetrators" were better off than the general population, who were the real victims. Participation in a programme involving the whole community is therefore the best way of ensuring that former child soldiers again become full members of society.

Measuring the results of the War Child programme

In this report War Child draws attention to the problems facing children in post-war Sierra Leone, explains how War Child's work is helping to find solutions to these problems, and lists the results achieved via the programme. The results themselves are based on extensive research among 1,200 respondents from six communities. Three measurements were carried out: one prior to the programme, one a year into the programme and a third two years after the start of the programme.

The results were measured on the basis of five indicators for success, formulated when the programme was drawn up. These indicators provide information on the extent to which the community contributes to the healthy psychosocial development of children and young people. The indicators relate to: psychosocial problems of children and young people, support from adults and peers, access to play opportunities and participation in community activities, awareness of children's rights, and positive communication and interaction.

Children's rights, support, participation and expression

Awareness of children's rights has increased considerably. This is the most important and most obvious result of the programme. The vast majority of the members of the community were very much aware of children's rights by the end of the programme. There are also indications that this has led to positive change in the behaviour of adults. Children feel they are being supported more, and are allowed to participate in meetings and in activities more often. They are allowed to express themselves and their views are being heard. These are all important factors for empowering children and young people, and these results show that the community-based programme helps in this regard.

More harmony, positive communication, respect

Various research results have shown that the level of harmony in the communities has improved. There is now more positive communication and respectful interaction between children and adults. Children and adults also report a drop in aggressive behaviour. These results are confirmed by the fact that more than half the adults and children regard "the increase in the degree of harmony within the community" as being the biggest change to have taken place as a result of the War Child programme. On the basis of these results, we can conclude that the programme has helped to build peaceful communities.

It is to be expected that the results apply to a large section of the community, including the former child soldiers. In a harmonious environment in which people respect each other and in which people talk and listen to one another, in which children and young people are allowed to have a say and express themselves in sport, music and dance, former child soldiers also have the opportunity to put their pasts behind them and build towards a new, peaceful future.

Recommendations for future research

The research generated contradictory results regarding play opportunities for children and their participation in community activities. Even before the start of the programme it was clear that children in fact already had sufficient playtime and access to play areas. However, at the same time, the respondents referred to the increase in opportunities for children to play as one of the most significant changes resulting from the programme. Further research is necessary to determine the extent to which play opportunities for children are limited, and which activities are most suitable for ensuring that is improvements are made. Contradictory results were also found relating to support provided by parents. This research revealed that parental support was already reasonably high before the start of the programme. However, other participatory needs assessments performed outside the scope of this research have revealed that precisely the lack of parental support is one of the major problems. It is recommended that further research be carried out into this issue as well.

In conclusion

The outcomes of this survey will enable War Child to improve the content of the community-based programme. There are also a number of valuable lessons in relation to the execution of research such as this. These are referred to in the full research report at www.warchild.nl. Lastly, the research also contributes to the measurability of the effects of psychosocial support programmes in current and former conflict areas.

From a life with the rebels to a life in catering

Monica (20) spent five years with the rebels in the jungle. "I was nine when I was taken to a training camp. I learned to use weapons and was sent to the front line one and a half months later. After the war I was unable to attend school because I had to earn money. I found a catering job where I was also given training. War Child taught me how to talk to people. I also learned how to be nice to people. This is now very important for my work because you have to know how to approach people and how you can make them feel at ease. I learned that if people do you harm, it is better not to retaliate too aggressively. The most important thing is to get along with each other."

Endnotes

1   Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK), Conflict Barometer 2006.
2   UNDP website, Human Development Report 2006, Sierra Leone:
    http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_SLE.html, April 2007.
3   The full research paper 'Let pikin bisniss be all men bisniss'. Survey Community based Psychosocial
    programme War Child Sierra Leone 2005 – 2006 is available at www.warchild.nl.
4   United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Children and DDR,
    2007 and Paris Principles, 2007.
5   Mid-range Wars and Atrocities of the Twenty-First Century, website: http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat4.htm,
    May 2007.
6   Human Right Watch (HRW), We Will Kill You If You Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leonean Conflict, 2003.
7   Handicap International, website, http://www.handicap-international.fr/dance-le-monde/nos-pays-dintervention/
    programmes/sierraleone/contexte/index.html, May 2007.
8   This is the estimated number of child soldiers, although ultimately only 6,845 children took part in the formal process
    of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. According to the Human Right Watch report 'We Will Kill You
    If You Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leonean Conflict', 3,000 girls who were entitled to reintegration did
    not register.
9   UNDP website, Human Development Report 2006, Sierra Leone:
    http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_SLE.html, April 2007.
10 International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Child and Forced Labour in Post Conflict Sierra Leone, online
    report 9/2/2005, http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221262&Language=EN.
11 UNIOSIL, website http://www.uniosil.org, May 2007.
12 Human Rights Watch (HRW), Youth, Poverty, and Blood: the Lethal Legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors,
    March 2005, Vol.17, No 5(A).
13 This estimate is calculated on the basis of existing statistics and corresponds with the estimate made by War Child's
    local staff in Sierra Leone.

14 A random selection of 18% of the respondents from three of the six communities.
15 Total population = 14,103, N (total) = 1200, # per community = 200.
16 It cannot be proven conclusively that improvements in the communities can be exclusively attributed to the War Child
    programme because it was impossible, for ethical and practical reasons, to have communities participate in the
    research as control groups. Although a relationship between the effects found and the War Child intervention can be
    regarded as plausible, the influence of other factors cannot be excluded. In the first instance, War Child regards this
    survey as a learning instrument, on which it can base future improvements to its interventions.
17 With a view to allowing the respondents to speak more freely about their problems, the questions were formulated as
    follows: "Have you, or has anyone who know, ever suffered from ..." However, the way in which the questions were
    formulated makes it difficult to draw any conclusions from the answers. In theory, all children can say that they know
    someone with a drugs problem and they may all be referring to the same, sole drug addict in the community. The
    results must therefore be interpreted with some degree of caution.
18 Risen from 3 to 3.6. (1 = not, 2 = a little, 3 = enough, 4 = a lot).
19 During the second and third measurement, adults and children answered questions on communication and inter-
    action. However, this issue was not included in the first measurement carried out before the start of the programme.
    This means that the changes described in this paragraph are changes indicated later by the respondents themselves.
    Therefore, these are not changes measured on the basis of a comparison with a zero measurement. The reliability
    of self-reporting is limited because of the high probability of socially desirable answers.
20 Children: 2.04 and parents 1.8. (1 = very good, 2 = good, 3 = not good, 4 = poor, 5 = very poor).
21 Children: 2.04 and parents 1.8. (1 = very good, 2 = good, 3 = not good, 4 = poor, 5 = very poor).
22 For children, between 2.6 and 1.9 and for parents, between 2.5 and 1.8. (1 = yes always, 2 = sometimes, 3 = no
    never).
23 This project focuses on premature school leavers, young people who have not been able to study or receive training
    due to the war and young people in a weaker position in society such as girls, people with disabilities, working young
    people and former child soldiers. The programme provides non-formal education (learning to read and do arithmetic,
    life skills and vocational training courses).

On the building:

Mabora Commu... Wellcome THE FFWC Concert team from Holland

MABORA COMMUNITY

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION CENTRE

Supported by

WAR child

HOLLAND

In the old days, the young people used to fight

"If children misbehave, they have no fear and show no respect for older people. In the past, young people mainly used to fight. They swore, stole, drank alcohol and smoked marihuana. These problems have all declined thanks to the awareness activities of the Community Action Groups."

Help War Child take the war out of a child soldier
This research shows how a War Child programme can make concrete contributions to the creation of harmonious communities which focus on the needs of children. Child soldiers can also learn to play a positive role in such communities.

By publishing this report, War Child is seeking to bring the problems child soldiers are facing to the attention of a large audience, helped by our organisation's reputation and the size of our constituency.

War Child hopes to join forces with politicians, policy makers, journalists, companies and individuals. Together we can contribute to a better life for those 300,000 child soldiers who are currently deployed in armed conflicts every day at various locations around the world. As well as providing an insight into the problem, the stories of Michael on page 8 and Monica on page 48 are also a cry for help: "Do not forget us!"

Help War Child take the war out of a child soldier. Visit www.warchild.nl to find out how.

Colofon