tool 57 Responding Through Advocacy: Ad-Hoc Release of Children in Eastern DRC

Case study

In July 2012, 33 children were released from a breakaway faction of an armed group active in the eastern province of South Kivu, DRC. The children had been with the group for two to three months.

The separation was made possible after a community child protection committee established a dialogue with the armed group, which had been recruiting children between the ages of 14 and 17 among its own ethnic community for some time. The community committee had received training on Security Council Resolution 1612 and been coached on awareness-raising and local advocacy initiatives by a national NGO that acts as the 1612 focal point in that region.

When the armed group eventually agreed to release the children, the community alerted the NGO, which then organized a mission to the area together with MONUSCO (the peace-keeping mission in DRC) and a representative from a transit center for former child soldiers in the provincial capital, Bukavu. The joint efforts of these actors enabled 22 children to immediately re-join their families in the area. The armed group was operating in a remote location, which constituted a challenge for the removal of the remaining 11 children whose families did not live in the immediate area or had not yet been traced. With the logistical support of a MONUSCO helicopter, the remaining children were safely transferred to the transit center in Bukavu, where they received further psychosocial support and vocational training while waiting to be re-integrated into a family setting.

In a context like DRC, ad-hoc demobilizations like these are not unusual and typically result from local advocacy conducted by communities, civil society or UN actors. This example demonstrates how local advocacy combined with an adequate follow-up mechanism can lead to tangible results for children victims of grave violations.

related tools

🔗 **tool 51** – Factsheet 'Linking, monitoring, prevention and response to grave violations'

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