Community Conversation as a Strategy to Prevent Recruitment of Children in Armed Groups

By
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Outline of the presentation

- Introduction
- Summary of Children in Armed conflict
- Community Conversation as a Strategy
- Examples of community conversation: Pictorial
- Samples of work plans
- Recommendations
Introduction

• The impact of terrorism on children cannot be underestimated.
• The cost of bringing lives to normalcy due to armed conflict is costly and time consuming.
• The first line of preventing armed conflict is in the families and communities where the children belong.
• The nurturing and values are inculcated at this level through socialization process.
• The militia groups are advanced in their approaches to indoctrinate children and young people with extremist ideas and lure them in their forces: Promises: economic gains

• *Strategy*: To sustainably address this phenomena, prevention strategies have a huge contribution to ameliorating the problem.

• Community conversation is a way to bring a diverse set of community members together to collectively brainstorm strategies and resources that can be used to address challenges facing the community.
• It is a very important approach to prevent children from joining armed groups and the involvement of an entire community to discuss the entire subject matter of armed conflict and propose measures to prevent children from joining armed groups.

• Issues raised include: Protection and safety mechanisms for vulnerable children at the community levels, listening to the community, prioritize on issues, institute initiatives, concretize actions and at the same time monitor closely criminal gangs and terrorism activities.
Background of armed conflict

Poverty remains a key issue in many child protection work. Many parents are unable to provide for even the most basic material needs for their children. Their lost capacity to serve as primary care-givers has led to widespread sentiments of helplessness and defeat. With parents unable to provide for basic needs, and without positive livelihood alternatives, children are adopting coping mechanisms which quite often put them at even greater risk of abuse and exploitation. When wars erupt, women, children and youth are the most vulnerable and bear brunt. They are used as shields.
• Community conversation is one strategy when well applied will address armed conflicts
• Community conversation” is a way to bring a diverse set of community members together to collectively brainstorm strategies and resources that can be used to address a challenges facing the community
• In short, it provides a fun and creative way to find local solutions and new partners to address issues that matter most in a community.
• Armed conflict is a phenomenon that needs concerted effort by various stakeholders including the community: Therefore, community strategies contribute a great deal to ameliorate the problem.

• Who are the targets: Children because they are vulnerable and easily recruited:

• Where do master minds of armed group come from? From the community:

The key actors involved in the entire chain of recruitment are family members where the arrangements are well coordinated and in most cases well known.
• Conversations are part of life, and are an important part of community building. At the same time deliberating on foreseeable challenges that may put the community in jeopardy: Preventive mechanisms are discussed and strategies put in place by the community

• A community conversation happens when a group of people from a community get together to talk.
Benefits of community conversation to prevent armed conflict

An opportunity to increase community understanding of dynamics employed in recruiting children, the impact of armed conflict on children, child well-being and to participate in improving the well-being of children and fulfilling their rights while in the community.

A platform to bring together a diverse group of community members to hold a dialogue about their hopes and concerns, creating a springboard for community based action to make their community safer.

An opportunity to increase the commitment of the community to protection of children. Looking at key concerns: Child Soldiers.
Where can a conversation about keeping children safe take place?

- In schools or homes
- In any place where community meetings traditionally take place – this may be inside a building or outside
- In community centres or libraries
- In places of worship
- At meetings of community child protection committees or specialised child and youth service organisations
How to conduct community conversation

- Mobilize a group of different people from the community for two days to talk to each other.
- The optimum number is between 15 to 20 people.
- Involve men and women, parents, teenagers and younger children, older men and women, teachers, religious leaders and business people in the area.
Include people from government and non-government organisations involved in protecting children such as school teachers and heads, social workers, community development workers, agricultural extension agents, local police, a local government official or local elected leader or local chief/traditional leader, someone from the clinic or local hospital –
The chances of your conversation turning into actions and actual detection, protection and surveillance will be greatly improved by including such people.

Some of the conversation will take place with children and youth separate from adults.

Gender balance
Pictures showing community conversations in session in one of the project sites of ANPPCAN Regional Office
Community Conversation with Parents
Community conversation with children
10-14 years
Community conversation with youth
15-22 years
Community conversations with leaders in a chiefs camp
Community conversation with teachers
Action plans

• Community conversation must end in a structured manner with concrete resolutions so that action can be initiated. It is more sustainable.

• Therefore action plans must be well guided to bring out priorities that the community can realize based on the resources within their reach.
A Sample of a work plan after CC

• During one of the community conversations conducted by ANPPCAN Regional Office, useful information emerged on some of the key issues facing children, child protection practices available in the communities, challenges and recommendations were shared on how to improve child protection systems at the community levels.
# Children and youth work plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution</td>
<td>counseling</td>
<td>Teachers, Peers, Social workers, Doctors, parents</td>
<td>As need arises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labour</td>
<td>Creation of awareness</td>
<td>Parents, Teachers, Police, Doctors, Social workers</td>
<td>As need arises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang violence</td>
<td>Community policy</td>
<td>Security ministry, Police, Chiefs, DOs and DCs</td>
<td>As need arises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provision of security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corruption</td>
<td>Transparency Monitoring</td>
<td>Social workers, Politicians, Churches, Leaders, Women representative</td>
<td>As need arise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful traditional practices</td>
<td>Community education</td>
<td>Churches, Traditional leaders</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>Person Responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sanitation</td>
<td>Mobilization and merger of different youth groups in Kawangware for clean-up exercises throughout the year</td>
<td>The officials of the youth group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Denial of educational rights</td>
<td>Awareness campaigns</td>
<td>Schools, local education officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Poor parenting</td>
<td>Sensitization and education on parenting</td>
<td>Local opinion leaders and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Insecurity of children to drugs and negative peer influence</td>
<td>Enforcement of the law Sensitization of the community through awareness campaigns</td>
<td>Law enforcers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Teachers work plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Time-Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Alcoholism</td>
<td>Establishment of vocational training institutes.</td>
<td>Law enforcers.</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Arrest of producers, sellers of alcohol and effecting heavy penalties on the vices.</td>
<td>Community at Large.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conducting public awareness campaigns.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Rehabilitation of producers, sellers and consumers of alcohol.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Obstruction of justice systems through corruption</td>
<td>Reshuffle and transfer of chiefs and police officer to forestall familiarity with abusers of children.</td>
<td>Community at large.</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Training of parents on parenting skills.</td>
<td>Opinion leaders.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Socio-economic empowerment of youths through support groups so that they can generate income as they influence each other positively.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Child prostitution (14-15 year old girls)</td>
<td>Establishement of vocational centers for children who are not willing to continue with primary school education.</td>
<td>Community at large</td>
<td>Continuous process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>High drop-out rates</td>
<td>Establishement of vocational centers for children who are not willing to continue with primary school education.</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Community at Large.</td>
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• **Recommendations**
  
  • Community based CP systems need to be strengthened in tandem with the national systems not as add-ons or alternatives.

  • Both formal and informal community based CP systems should be supported in capacities through mutual interaction.

  • Working with existing structures such as religious and health networks, local authorities, educational actors and traditional leaders can have a more real and sustainable impact on improving standards of child protection.
Thank you very much

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