

Child Soldiers Coalition West Africa Project

Evaluation Report

Martin Clark, September 2009

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The project being evaluated ran from July 2005 to March 2009, focussing on two countries in West Africa: Guinée and Cote d'Ivoire.

The project was significantly changed in December 2006 when the Coalition realised the proposed approach of creating a large network in the region was not working well and no longer in line with its overall modus operandi. Rather than create a regional structure as originally envisaged, the coalition would work directly with national partners in fewer countries. Objectives were reformulated but it is suggested that more attention should have been paid to strategy development at this point.

Work with *Save the Children* was key throughout the project, not only as the organisation that hosted the Coalition's Project Manager and the selection of partners but also the identification and delivery of activities, many of which were developed in the context of larger Save projects. Although the project should have allowed each organisation to contribute its particular expertise towards common goals and there are positive indications of the value-add the coalition did bring, effective complementarity was not always achieved in practice with challenges both at the conceptual, strategic and operational levels and the Coalition approach being potentially lost in that of the larger organisation.

PROGRESS AGAINST OBJECTIVES

As would be expected in a project of this scale, progress towards the policy and practice change objectives was mixed:

Ratification of the Optional Protocol on child soldiers to provide a legal framework for protection was a key focus for the work: both as an end in itself and as the basis of capacity-building with local partners (an example of the sometimes unclear 'hierarchy' of objectives). In Cote d'Ivoire, in particular with the NGO Forum, a campaign was initiated towards ratification. Despite a law enabling succession in 2006 and positive responses from key government figures, concrete progress has been limited. There is a question as to what extent a clear political strategy was articulated or followed in this element of the work. In Guinée, political instability has also hampered real progress although a national coalition was formed to push for ratification and there now may be a 'window of opportunity' with the new government.

Increased Capacity of Local Organisations: Throughout the project a number of NGOs and others benefitted from training and other support provided by the Coalition and partners. The NGO Forum in Côte d'Ivoire are as a result implementing a campaign for OP ratification and appear to be working well with the continued support of Save the Children. ROPERM, a network born out of Coalition training in Cote d'Ivoire have proved more problematic with serious organisational deficiencies and are unlikely to survive. In Guinée, Sabou Guinée a firmly established NGO have taken forward training of others with Coalition support but other projects which the Coalition supported have had more mixed outcomes. Work with ARCPN and others in Guinée supported interesting grassroots work with notable direct impact for beneficiaries but inevitably on a small local scale.

Although individual training sessions for local organisations were well received, important questions arise about the role of training and similar support in this project including the relationships between training and capacity-building, the provision of grants, to what extent training was the most appropriate intervention for the Coalition and the need for more systematic needs assessment and follow-up.

Increased Knowledge about child soldier related issues which go unreported: This too is an objective that could have been better defined (whose knowledge, on what, for what). Although initial research surveying DDR programmes in the region was clearly valuable to the Coalition and others, several other areas for research identified in the project documentation were not progressed. The Coalition provided some support to research on *cross-border recruitment in Guinée* commissioned by Save-Sweden with Sabou Guinée which was progressed but again with mixed results.

Improved Monitoring and Reporting and strengthening local child protection mechanisms: Much of the Coalition's work here was in the context of an overall Save-UK Initiative to set up nationwide child protection monitoring and responding framework in Côte d'Ivoire and, in the earlier phases of the project, the Coalition also worked with UN bodies and NGOs under the 1612 mechanism. The formation of ROPERM however as a local 'child protection network', was not a success. In Guinée, significant support was given to develop child protection networks with local partners in particular ARCPN and Sabou Guinée which was more successful in directly supporting reintegration.

Increased child Participation in 'Awareness-raising': Throughout the project there was a clear focus on engaging with children and working with them on campaigning and advocacy initiatives, in particular in the use of theatre, which seems to have worked well, and in support to a Children's Parliament which was less successful. Although in some cases direct and positive impact is apparent a question also arises as to what extent those involved in some of the other 'popular campaigning' initiatives fully understood the messages. This with questions of child protection, confidentiality and 'informed consent' highlights the need to develop policies and practices for work with children. It is welcome that a project to address some of these questions has been initiated by the Coalition.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

In terms of overall impact, the Coalition was clearly instrumental in bringing the issue of child soldiers to the fore in the region. Although progress against objectives is mixed, many of those with who the Coalition worked should now be in a stronger position to continue key areas of work. The situation in the region remains fragile and prevention-work is stressed as key should fighting break out again. The experience gained in this project does however highlight a number of key areas of learning:

Operationally, there are needs to continue to develop policies and procedures for working with children and providing the necessary support and guidance to staff working in the field.

Partnership working with Save the Children and local organizations was key to the project. Working through existing successful networks and organisations was proved to be more successful but greater investment in the selection of partners and establishing a common understanding of the nature of the relationships and basing that on a properly articulated strategy would have been of value.

Related to partnership working is the coalition's role in **capacity-building**. Frequently however it seems as if capacity building was limited to providing training with a call for more sustained follow-up. Long-term capacity building, particularly in fragile post-conflict settings can be a resource and time intensive process. It is important to decide to what extent capacity building is an objective in its own right and/or as a necessary intervention towards other objectives.

Although not articulated as an objective, a significant amount of work was also directed to **community-level attitudinal change**. It is interesting that much of the documentation and interviewees also highlighted this

as a need. Again, what is not clear however is how this fits into an overall articulated strategy and to what extent this is accepted as a role for the Coalition in making best use of its expertise and resources for widespread and lasting change.

Strategically, more attention should have been paid at the outset, and when the approach was changed after the first year, to elaborate a clear goal and set of strategic objectives including how the objectives inter-relate and to what extent the fulfilment of one is understood as necessary for progress on others as well as a clear decision on the activities needed to achieve each. There is also the apparent absence of a clear 'political strategy' for achieving national policy change.

With such an approach based on an in depth analysis of the situation on the ground and mapping of available capacity, more explicit and informed decisions could have been made on the balance of activities including capacity-building/training and community-level attitudinal change (which was the focus of much of the work) but also on research and direct advocacy (internationally as well as nationally) which was de-facto de-prioritized in the work.

It is therefore suggested that the Coalition needs to be clearer about its overall '**theory of change**': An (evidence-based) assumption on how the desired change will happen and the particular role the Coalition can play towards its achievement.

A key element of such decisions is to what extent the Coalition continues to undertake community-based work. Factors include a feeling from many that change happens locally. However, the Coalition as a human-rights organisation focuses on the role of the state. These are not necessarily in contradiction, particularly with a clear strategy recognising the essential and related contribution of both policy and practice change and it was suggested that the best national and international advocacy is based on experience and voices from the field. It is clear though that building partnerships with local NGOs and engaging in community-based work is not easy, and for the Coalition would require support from a larger organization and lessons on how to make this work can be drawn from the experiences with Save the Children in this project. The Coalition does however need to make decisions on country-work based on an assessment of needs on the ground, the presence or absence of other international and national actors, and detailed consideration of the nature of Coalition's particular contribution and capacity to deliver change.

There are important and fundamental considerations for the Coalition about its mission and operational focus. It is welcome that the Coalition is actively addressing these questions including through a large project on which it is embarking to strengthen strategic planning and develop methods and approaches for assessing impact. It is hoped this evaluation can make a useful contribution to the process.

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1. Introduction

An independent evaluation of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (the Coalition) West Africa Project (July 2005 – March 2009) in accordance with the requirements of the funder, the Baring Foundation.

Prepared by Martin Clark, an independent consultant working with not-for-profit organisations, who led the design of the evaluation and drafted the final report. Emma de Vise, a consultant with previous experience working with the Coalition in Africa, conducted the interviews in Guinée and Côte d'Ivoire and contributed additional invaluable insights.

1.1 SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This report is based on a review of documentation provided by the Coalition (see Appendix 3); interviews with and some written input from current and former coalition staff and follow-up conversations with senior staff at the Coalition secretariat. Field interviews were conducted in April-May 2009 with partners, authorities, beneficiary groups and other civil society actors (see list of interviewees in Appendix 2). A draft of the report was made available to the Coalition and the few resulting comments have been reflected as further input to the review.

This external evaluation complements the internal end of year and other reports submitted to Baring.

The evaluation seeks to meet the requirements of the donor but we hope some of the learning points identified are of particular use to the Coalition as they think not only about the work in West Africa but more generally about their models of planning and delivery. As reflected in places in the text, this evaluation was undertaken at a time when the Coalition is embarking on a larger project to strengthen strategic planning and develop methods and approaches for assessing impact.

A summary of the project and its development is given, with a calendar summarising key events (appendix 1). It does not attempt to duplicate all the rich detail on activities and reported outcomes submitted to the funder by the Coalition although this is drawn on heavily in the report; rather complement this with an analysis based on the views of stakeholders in the region and external commentary.

The report also does not attempt to summarise the situation, including that for child soldiers, in the region which served as the context and driver for the work. This is available in the Coalition documents (listed in the appendix). We have however included reflections on the current situation and needs provided by interviewees on the ground (part 7.1).

The evaluation was asked to address the following questions:

1. **Activities:** *What activities were undertaken*

These are summarised but this report does not seek to replicate the more detailed activity reports submitted to the donor. Although it was not possible to cross-check all reported activities with field reports there is nothing to suggest that previous activity reports don't give an accurate picture of the work done.

2. **Efficiency:** *How efficiently were resources used to realize the activities*

The question that emerged through the evaluation is less about the (reasonably high) level of activities undertaken with available resources but to what extent they were the most appropriate for the desired

change. Budgetary information was not made available so is not considered within the remit of this evaluation.¹

3. Effectiveness: *The 'quality' of the activities and associated outcomes*

Outcomes are summarised against objectives in part 3 below. Further observations are given in section 5.

A number of activities were conducted that can be seen as towards community attitudinal change and the results, and associated challenges, of this work are discussed with those other activities including changed capacity of local partners, effectiveness, and other observations including those on involving children.

4. Sustainability: *Are local partners in a position to carry out activities independently*

Summarised in Part 7.3 below.

5. Lessons Learnt: *In terms of the strategy, approaches, partnerships, and delivery*

Each of these is addressed in detail below, in particular part 4 on work with partners, part 5 which draws lessons from some of the activities, part 6 on strategic approaches and conclusions in part 8.

6. Future work: *Should the Coalition consider further work in West Africa and if so of what type*

It was not anticipated that an evaluation with this scope can answer this question fully. Such decisions need to be based on a fuller assessment of the social and political context, broader discussions about the Coalitions future work and an assessment of relative priority of West Africa against other regions. This report does however seek to give input within its remit to inform such decisions.

Caveats

This was not a straightforward project to evaluate in terms of outcomes. As well as the usual challenges of lasting change not becoming apparent until sometime after activities, there are particular questions as to attribution, particularly as so much of the work was with good reason carried out with partners, in particular Save the Children as well as local partners. This is explored in the text.

There were particular difficulties in evaluating the earlier parts of the project, particularly year 1. As explained below, there was a fundamental shift in approach at this time. Most of those spoken to in the field were unaware of the Coalition's work before March 2007. This is taken to be a result both of a high turnover of staff in the field and the nature of the work undertaken in the earlier phases.

1.2 GLOSSARY OF KEY PEOPLE, PLACES AND POLICIES²

Locations: Côte d'Ivoire

- **Abidjan:** Largest city. Economic and former political capital of Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Man:** Town and department in west-central Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Bloléquin:** Small town and commune in the west of Côte d'Ivoire, bordering Liberia.

¹ Some brief comments are included in 5.5 however regarding financial support to partners.

² Included here as it is noticeable that in no one place in the documentation as made available was a clear overview such as this provided which did contribute to some of the practical frustrations in compiling this evaluation.

Guinée

- **N'zérékoré:** Largest city in the **Guinée Forestière** region of south-eastern Guinée near the borders with Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Hosts large number of [refugees](#) from conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. **Macenta** is a town and prefecture located in the N'zérékoré region.

Senegal

- **Casamance:** area of [Senegal](#) with ongoing low-level [conflict](#) over independence.

Selected organisations involved in the Project

- **Save the Children** Save-UK and Save-Sweden in particular and Save-US (discussed in part 4.1³)
- **Force Armées des Forces Nouvelles:** Armed group of rebel forces in Côte d'Ivoire formed around a core of former Ivorian soldiers.
- **UNOCI / ONUCI** (United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire) and **UNICEF** and **UNHCR:** UN mechanisms.
- **NGO Forum** (*Coalition des ONGs pour la defense des droits de l'enfant*). Coalition of 50 NGOs based in Abidjan. (part 4.2)
- **PECI:** Children's Parliament, Côte d'Ivoire (part 3.4)
- **ROPERM** (*Reseau des ONG Protection de l'enfant Region des Montagnes*). Child Protection Network/ NGO grouping in Man. (part 4.3)
- **PNRRC** (*Programme National de reinsertion et de rehabilitation Communautaire*). Based in the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs (MFFAS) in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Sabou Guinée:** established NGO in Guinée Forestière (part 4.5)
- **COLTE:** Guinean national coalition of NGOs working on child trafficking and children in conflict. The main child protection structure in the country (part 4.4)
- **ARCPN:** Community-based organisation of Liberian refugees in Guinée. Work with **ADDF** who have links with the education system (part 4.6)
- **GARD:** Guinean NGO who were to set up a Child Protection Network in border town of Macenta (3.4)

Relevant International Standards and Mechanisms

- **The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict**⁴ ('the OP'): Sets 18 as the minimum age for participation in hostilities in armed forces and prohibits the recruitment or use of any person below the age of 18 by non-state armed groups. Not so far ratified by any of the countries covered by the project.
- **The Paris Principles and Guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups**⁵ (the Paris Principles): Provide detailed information on best practices for release and reintegration

³ Many of these organisations are referenced throughout the text. The identified section gives the background to their work.

⁴ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-conflict.htm>

⁵ <http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/parisprinciples.html>

programmes as well as longer-term human rights and legal issues needed for sustainable child protection.

- **UN Security Council Resolution 1612⁶**: Passed in 2005, established a reporting and monitoring and reporting mechanism on abuses of children in armed conflict including child soldiers under which UN-led country task-forces report to the Security Council which can take action in response to reports and call for action from governments and other UN mechanisms. (In August 2008, Côte d'Ivoire was officially 'delisted' under 1612 as a country where child recruitment takes place.)

Several *set-piece dates* are also referenced in the text including 12 February – International day to stop the use of child soldiers; 16 June – International day of the African Child; and 10 December – International Human Rights day.

2. Project Overview

2.1 HISTORY

The Coalition has had a presence in West Africa since 2004. In 2005, an initial evaluation of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in West Africa was undertaken to identify what was needed. It highlighted many issues including the need to strengthen capacity for durable mechanisms to protect children from military recruitment and use in armed conflict.

The project was initially conceived and designed when the Coalition was prioritizing the establishment of regional structures globally primarily to carry out joint advocacy, locally, nationally and internationally. In West Africa it was intended that a network of community-based organizations would be formed. The Coalition was to provide the network with capacity building support as well as support to research and advocacy activities.

A block grant was received from Baring Foundation to support the creation of a network of approximately 50 community-based organisations in four countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinée and Côte d'Ivoire. A core grant was also received for support from the Coalition's International Secretariat to the West Africa Network. The project was due to run from 1 July 2005 to March 2008.

The long-term goal of the project as stated in the original proposal was *"to effectively protect children in conflict in West Africa from recruitment as soldiers and to ensure the demobilization and proper rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of those children who are being used as soldiers"*. The original proposal contained ambitious objectives including the successful reintegration and repatriation of thousands of children.

A number of changes to the project were approved by Baring in December 2006 following its first year, in response to the Coalition's developing ways of working. It was said that at the time *"it was clear the coalition was on the wrong track and after a review the project was almost completely redesigned"*.

Rather than create a regional structure, the coalition would work directly with national partners. The countries covered by the project were reduced to three, with priority given to the work in Côte d'Ivoire. A one year no-cost extension was agreed and the project end date was revised to March 2009.

⁶ <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/439/59/PDF/N0543959.pdf?OpenElement>

The direction of the work was thereafter defined by the Annual Activity Plans, agreed with the funder, with activities based on those 'needs' identified in the original project proposal.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

Annual Reports for the years 2007-08 and 2008-9 report against the following goal and objectives:

Goal: *Contribute to the protection of children from armed conflict in West Africa, in particular by supporting and strengthening partners and networks to advocate for government action and sustained funding for effective prevention, repatriation and reintegration programs for children associated (or formerly associated) with armed forces and groups.*

Objectives:

1. *Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP) by the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinée Conakry.*
2. *Increased capacity of local organizations to understand and advocate on the legal framework governing children associated with the armed forces, such as the OP, and in the implementation of best practices for reintegration as recommended in the Paris Principles.*
3. *Increased knowledge about child soldier-related issues which go unreported, such as cross border recruitment occurring between Côte d'Ivoire, Guinée and Liberia, and girls associated with armed forces and groups.*
4. *Improved monitoring and reporting on children in armed conflict and strengthened local child protection mechanisms.*
5. *Increased child participation in awareness-raising.*

It is interesting to note how the objectives and associated emphasis has been changed throughout the project history:

Early activity reports do not explicitly put the **ratification of the OP** as an objective but it is included as such in later stages above. It is not clear for example to what extent it was envisaged that direct advocacy would be used to contribute to achieving this objective and/or if the work was solely focussed on increasing the capacity of partner organisations to advocate for its ratification.

Documentation for year 2 of the project (to August '07) includes reference to **awareness-raising** for 'decision makers and donors' on the importance of long-term programmes for protection (and work was done with international donors in the early phases of the project). Beyond the specific objective related to child participation, this isn't included as an objective for the latter stages of the project but as will be seen covers much of the work that was done with communities as well as decision-makers.

Capacity Building which - as will be seen later - formed a substantial proportion of the work, is described more specifically (in terms of audiences and subject) in the later formulation above.

The first year of the project refers to **Increased knowledge** of child DDR programmes and organisations in the region; the second year refers to investigating the patterns of cross-border recruitment and the latter formulation talks about '*issues which go unreported*' including cross-border recruitment again and that of girls associated with armed forces and groups. It is not always clear throughout *whose* knowledge the project is seeking to increase.

Monitoring, reporting and local protection mechanisms are not explicitly mentioned as an objective in the early versions of the strategy as above but are reflected in an objective for the later phase.

Finally, **child-participation** is also not bought out in the initial documentation but is again set as an objective in the latter stages.

For the sake of this report, we have (Section 3) summarised activities and outcomes around each of the five objectives reflected in later project documentation noting a sixth (implicit) objective of ‘awareness-raising / attitudinal change’ (discussed in 5.1).

What is clear however is that not enough attention was given at the initial planning and design stage, and in particular when the project was amended, to elaborate a clear goal and set of strategic objectives. The various formulations and reformulations indicate perhaps a lack of clarity about purpose: what it was intended to achieve and how and how the various objectives related to each other and to the ultimate goal.

Interestingly (and perhaps tellingly), the initial ToR for this evaluation as first drafted by the coalition framed the work under a further articulation of the “*core objectives of the project*” (emphasis added):

- *Building capacity and providing technical support to local NGOs and CBOs to strengthen and support their efforts to advocate for the prevention of child recruitment and use through strengthening child protection frameworks, including ratification of the Optional Protocol, and community education and awareness-raising.*
- *Building capacity and providing technical support to local NGOs to strengthen and support monitoring and reporting on the recruitment and use of child soldiers.*
- *Generating awareness and building capacity among national and local government officials and members of armed groups to encourage their involvement in preventing the recruitment and use of children.*
- *Facilitating and supporting the increased participation of children in advocacy for strengthened child protection frameworks and prevention of child recruitment.*

This is another good, but post-facto, description of what work was actually done rather than initially planned.

Further reflections on objective setting are also given below and in particular what this suggests about what assumptions were or were not made about an underlying ‘theory of change’ (Section 6).

2.3 COUNTRIES COVERED

The initial block grant from the funder covered the creation of a network in four priority countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinée and Côte d’Ivoire. When the project was revised three countries were selected: Guinée, Côte d’Ivoire and to a lesser extent Senegal. The work has prioritised Côte d’Ivoire with other work in Guinée. It is work in these latter two countries that is the subject of most project documentation, activities certainly in the later phases of the project, and was explored with field interviews so form the basis of this review.

The Year 1 Annual Monitoring Report, noting that the Coalition needed to concentrate on specific projects and countries, suggests “*Côte D’Ivoire, being the only ongoing conflict at the moment, should be prioritised.*” This was then carried forwards as can be seen in the balance of activities reported for latter phases of the project.

In Senegal/Casamance, work led by UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden, in which the Coalition was to engage, was postponed with their funding shortfalls and staff turnover. It was resumed in December 2008,

by which time the Coalition was focusing on Guinea and Ivory Coast, and the Project Manager did not have time to assist in the planned capacity building.

The region is generally volatile and in December 2008, a coup d'état took place in Guinea, which further destabilised the environment in which direct advocacy with the government (the military junta) is a viable option.

Other questions of geography and explicit or de-facto prioritisation are addressed in a later section.

3. Summary of Progress against Objectives

Overviews of activities below are drawn mainly from project documentation. More information is also given in appendix 1 of activities. Further information and associated reflections including additional perspectives from interviewees are given in the later sections exploring the work with key partners and some general observations.

Of course many activities are seen to contribute to more than one objective so not too much should be read into the placing of activities under one or another heading below. As reflected elsewhere, however there wasn't necessarily a commonly understood 'hierarchy' of objectives: i.e. an understanding of how the objectives inter-relate and to what extent the fulfilment of one is understood as necessary for progress on others.

3.1 RATIFICATION OF THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL BY CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND GUINÉE

Once ratified, the Optional Protocol, within international law, imposes a legal obligation on states to uphold its provisions. If implemented the treaty would provide a legal framework to protect children from recruitment or use for military purposes, and accountability for those who violate its provisions (by recruiting and using child soldiers). Treaty ratification is seen by the Coalition as an important objective in that it provides a means by which human rights defenders (and child rights activists in this case) can advocate for laws and other policy changes to ensure this protection is a reality for children.

Ratification of the OP throughout the project has both been seen as an end in itself and as the basis for capacity-building work with partners in both countries.

Côte d'Ivoire

A significant level of activity in Côte d'Ivoire was focussed in OP ratification. In particular in the later stages of the project in work with and through the NGO Forum (see 4.2 below).

In July 2006, the Côte D'Ivoire General Assembly adopted a law enabling accession to the Optional Protocol, but there has not been much concrete subsequent progress, seen primarily as a reflection of government lack of commitment to the issue.

Activities have included training to support partners' advocacy, direct dialog with officials (by and with the NGO Forum and others) and an amount of grassroots public campaigning including a 'Children's Caravan' in Abidjan and Man and support to Save and local NGOs in a concert and 'red hand collection' for the Day of the African Child. In Abidjan 500 children marched to the General Assembly, where a delegation made a presentation including a call for the OP.

The Ministers of Family, Gender and Social Affairs (MFFAS) and Foreign Affairs have committed to the principles and to follow-up on ratification as has the *Chef de Cabinet*. There is reasonable indication that pressure from civil society - the Coalition and NGO Forum - played a key role in getting these commitments.

It is not always clear however in the documentation and through interviews exactly the status of ratification at the moment. We were told that although the National Assembly has approved ratification, the contact-person in the government died recently and the NGO Forum are working to get the replacement up-to-speed and on-board. The MFFAS have been described as the key ministry but not being very proactive and claiming it's more a military issue. The NGO Forum has also been targeting the presidency directly. At the time of field interviews we were also told the OP was with the *Secrétaire Générale du Gouvernement* who now needs to send to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It may well be that the process itself is confused but this also perhaps points to the lack of a clear 'political strategy' based on a solid understanding of the policy-making process and key actors – key for successful advocacy of this type.

The NGO Forum is continuing to push for ratification, with Save the Children support as below, and it seems as if there is a reasonable chance for success with good follow-up.

Guinée

In the project Second Stage Report and Action Plan the Coalition reported that following discussion with relevant government actors, it hoped ratification would become a reality before February 2008. The continuing political instability however clearly made it difficult to make any real progress. After 2007, the Coalition described itself as changing strategy from direct advocacy with government and local advocacy through partners to supporting COLTE (section 4.4 below), a newly created national Coalition of NGOs to prepare an advocacy campaign.

COLTE believe there is now a window of opportunity for ratification and other child protection instruments after the new President made a speech pledging he will ensure that Guinea adheres to international standards of human rights and accelerate outstanding ratifications.

COLTE, again with Save the Children support, are to make this work a priority.

3.2 INCREASED CAPACITY OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO UNDERSTAND AND ADVOCATE ON THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARMED FORCES, SUCH AS THE OP, AND IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES FOR REINTEGRATION AS RECOMMENDED IN THE PARIS PRINCIPLES

Clearly, throughout the project a large number of NGOs and others benefitted from training and other support provided directly or through partners (itself often an outcome of support provided by the Coalition).

It was reported that 12 NGOs working in the field of Child Protection in Guinea and 45 in Côte d'Ivoire are benefiting from training, equipment, materials and grants provided by the Coalition and that "*the Coalition to build the capacity of close to 100 local structures on international standards*".

According to a spreadsheet provided by the Project Manager, between June 2006 and June 2008, 27 days of training in total were provided over 15 events, nearly all facilitated by the Project Manager, for 384 people from NGOs, governments, military and 'other'.

There is a clear appreciation from local partners that their capacity has been strengthened, in their understanding of the issues and by their increased credibility with local and national authorities. The results are outlined elsewhere in terms of to what extent local partners have been able to progress other objectives, but in short, in Côte d'Ivoire the NGO Forum has developed and is implementing an advocacy campaign for

the first time, and protection networks have been established and/or supported to good effect as seen with ARCPN and with less certain outcomes as seen with ROPERM discussed below.

Training modules were not examined as part of the evaluation but we understand the focus was to a large extent on one hand how international legal instruments should be implemented in the field, and secondly support to design advocacy campaigns. However, at least for the latter element, while such activities have as a result been launched it is not clear how well-designed the campaigns were in order to deliver identified policy change as opposed to community-based 'awareness-raising', which may have been more successful although on too small a scale to have widespread impact.

Training was provided either given directly or through partners to government officials in Côte d'Ivoire (at their request) and for police and military in the Guinée border area for example, some of which was within larger initiatives run by others. While of value, there is a question as to what extent some of such interventions fell clearly within the overall strategy to the extent that was articulated.

Other important questions also arise about the role of training and other support in this project including the relationships between training and capacity-building, the provision of grants, to what extent training was the most appropriate intervention and the need perhaps for more systematic needs assessment and follow-up. These are explored below in section 5.

3.3 INCREASED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILD SOLDIER-RELATED ISSUES WHICH GO UNREPORTED, SUCH AS CROSS BORDER RECRUITMENT OCCURRING BETWEEN CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GUINÉE AND LIBERIA, AND GIRLS ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES AND GROUPS.

In formulating this objective, it isn't immediately clear whose knowledge is referred to. Is it for example internal information for the Coalition's international member organizations⁷ such as Save the Children to inform more effective delivery of services and assistance to children affected by armed conflict; for public use to highlight the situation; to encourage other actors to work on the issues covered; or as the basis for direct advocacy with decision-makers? In reality, probably all of these were implicit considerations but clearer statement of purpose would perhaps have aided identifying the nature of 'product' as well as monitoring of effectiveness.

It could be argued that many of the public awareness and training activities detailed elsewhere helped fulfil a general objective to '*increase knowledge on child soldier-related issues*'⁸ but there is no indication of a particular focus on the issues highlighted in the objective.

In the initial phase of the project, a survey of DDR programs working to assist child soldiers in the region was undertaken. This was published in summary form ***Call to Action*** in July 2006 and became the basis for advocacy in that phase of the project. This was described as a comprehensive piece of work of use to UNICEF, Save the Children and others. Those we spoke to in field interviews who were aware of it also highlighted its uniqueness and usefulness.

Several other research projects are identified in project plans:

The documentation refers to a ***yearly report on the situation of child soldiers*** in West Africa but it is not clear what was intended and if that this was delivered aside from relevant extracts of the Coalition's triennial Global Reports.

⁷ The Coalition stated that as being advocacy-orientated, they would never carry out research just to 'increase knowledge'. However, as at least in part a service-delivery organisation, this would be a legitimate reason for Save the Children for example. The question however arises then as to what extent this should be the Coalition's role.

⁸ But see section 5.1 below for a discussion on 'increasing knowledge in an advocacy context.'

Documents at the end of the first year of the project also refer to plans to research on i) ***The Fate of foreign children in DDR programmes*** and ii) ***Good practice on informal demobilization of children before a peace process***. Again, it doesn't seem as if these were taken forwards, at least in the context of this project.

Research on ***cross-border recruitment in Guinée*** was commissioned by Save-Sweden within a project that also sought to build capacity through joint research with their (and the Coalition's) partner Sabou Guinée (part 4.5 below). The Coalition supported this through assisting in the recruitment of consultants and assisting (with a consultant) in the training of Sabou Guinée staff in research methodology. It should be noted however that the involvement was minimal - Sabou Guinée themselves understood it as a Save-Sweden funded project and were not aware of any Coalition involvement.

This research is now finished after what, from Save the Children descriptions, sounds a painful and protracted process with a turnover of consultants. The final report was written up by Sabou Guinée who describe it as having very good results. Save the Children however describe it as being too academic and only used internally. The Coalition Project Manager suggested it did "*increase the knowledge of the Coalition on issues influencing the recruitment of children across borders ... to design a more targeted approach to prevention*" but it is not clear how if at all this was put into practice. Save are looking at how it might be turned into a more practical document that can be shared with others. Sabou Guinée was also hoping to make a documentary film based on the research but this was not progressed.

Similar research on child recruitment in Casamance, Senegal, was postponed by UNICEF and other partners when overtaken by other priorities for UNICEF as a result of the ongoing conflict.

There is no indication of specific research initiatives on ***girls associated with armed forces***

3.4 IMPROVED MONITORING AND REPORTING ON CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT AND STRENGTHENED LOCAL CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS

There are, as implicit in the objective, two different but related aspects to this as an objective: Firstly national 'monitoring and reporting' (which would include the 1612 mechanism at least while Côte d'Ivoire was subject to it) and secondly the establishment of local bodies, ideally consisting of civil society and authorities who can monitor abuses, who children can approach and who can take appropriate action. Activities aimed at relevant legal and policy reform at one level to training for armed forces and groups can also be seen as contributing to this objective.

In ***Côte d'Ivoire***, at least in the earlier phases of the project, the previous Programme Manager described a substantial amount of work being done on the implementation of 1612 at the local level, including, according to the project documentation, training provided with UN bodies. Although Côte d'Ivoire was seen as a good model for reporting mechanisms, just one person the head of child protection for UNOCI was responsible with no broader committee being responsible for reports to the Security Council and, contrary to guidelines, other agencies including NGOs not being included with many cases of grave abuses, including sexual abuse of girls, therefore going unreported. He described a situation of conflict between UNICEF, peacekeepers and child protection mechanisms where the Coalition managed to act as a '*catalyst and mediator*' and project reports describe how "*facilitating the exchange of expertise and strategies between UN bodies, international and local NGOs succeeded in influencing some of these actors to revitalise their relevant programmes*" and a suggestion that the Coalition's interventions enabled local NGOs to participate in such processes. It was also suggested that – as with Save the Children – the coalition would be in a position to express concerns felt by UN agencies which they couldn't themselves express.⁹

⁹ We were unable to speak to UNICEF in Abidjan which are reported to have had much more exposure to the work of the NGO Forum, if not the coalition directly. The main contact in N'zerekore was also away at the time of the interviews. Those we did manage to speak to from UNICEF in Côte d'Ivoire were unfortunately not in a position to

In August 2008, various parties to the armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire were officially taken off the published list of child recruiters which is appended to the UN Secretary-General's annual report to the Security Council. Although this can be seen as a positive indication, this absolved UN bodies of its previous obligation to monitor and submit regular reports on child recruitment and other abuses under the 1612 mechanism. One respondent highlighted what they saw as a 'missed opportunity' for joint advocacy with the Coalition internationally on de-listing.¹⁰

Nationally, although in the absence of 1612 there is not an official UN mechanism to which to report. UNHCR and UNICEF describe various regular meetings on child protection, but were not aware of the Coalition participating (although Save the Children may do so).

The *PNRRC (Programme National de reinsertion et de rehabilitation Communautaire: Côte d'Ivoire)* is the Côte d'Ivoire government body, based in the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs (MFFAS) responsible for the national programme of DDR and which includes liaison officers with the *force nouvelles*. They provide community reintegration projects including vocational training and education and work in Man in partnership with UNICEF. The Coalition reportedly provided training for the PNRCC with UN staff and others in response to their acknowledged lack of capacity in areas of child protection. At the time of interviews, it was not clear if funding was available for the PNRRC's work after July.

Much of the Coalition's later work under this heading was in the context of an overall Save-UK Initiative to set up nationwide child protection monitoring and responding framework in Côte d'Ivoire. Within this context, the overall outcome was reported as "*Ten local NGOs and five international organisations currently conducting coordinated monitoring and reporting*" and local protection committees established with local NGOs, authorities and child protection officer in the *Force Nouvelle*. Here as elsewhere however it is hard to disaggregate exactly that contribution made by the Coalition.¹¹ Certainly, work with the NGO Forum which describes itself as a 'child protection network' seems to have been successful although the work with the Coalition was focussed on OP ratification rather than on them as a protection network. ROPERM, formed in Man and also described as a 'child protection network', was not a success as described below but, although it may not survive as a body in its own right, the skills on monitoring and reporting provided through training might, it is hoped, contribute to the engagement of constituent organisations in the monitoring and reporting mechanism for the western region of Côte D'Ivoire being developed by Save the Children.

In Guinée, significant support was given to develop child protection networks with local partners in the Forestière region bordering Sierra Leone and Liberia, where UNICEF in 2007 started a cross-border monitoring and reporting mechanism on child rights violations but didn't replace their local Child Protection Officer.

Through the Coalition's partner ARCPN, a community-based organisation of Liberian refugees, and Sabou Guinée, eight Child Protection Committees in N'zérékoré are working with the support of local authorities, in particular to aid children's reintegration into Guinean communities including 100 children formerly associated with the armed forces and groups and who cannot return to Liberia, Ivoirians who fought with the *Forces Nouvelles* and Guineans who were involved in the conflicts in neighbouring Liberia and Ivory Coast.

describe anything beyond the vaguest awareness of the work or some sporadic historic contact in the region.

¹⁰ It was explained however that advocacy within the country on delisting would not have been an appropriate strategy. This relates as well then to later observations about the role of international advocacy to complement national work in the project.

¹¹ This is not per-se problematic and could be understood as work that was well integrated with that of others about which there are mixed views as outlined in the later section looking at relationships with Save the Children.

The coalition provided ARCPN with funding (its sole source) and training and reports it has been able to become a major child protection actor in the region and has itself passed on the training (on rights of children in armed conflict, and Paris Principles) to others. The work with and of ARCPN is further explored in section 4.6 below.

The Coalition also provided initial training to a local NGO in Macenta (GARD) also in the Forestière region bordering Sierra Leone, to start a Child Protection Network. Unfortunately, according to the Project Manager, after a change of management GARD failed to respond to follow-up proposals and the project was abandoned.

While in N'zérékoré, we heard about a *local Comite d'Entente de Prevention* which local leaders attend on a weekly basis to diffuse any conflicts in the community. Protection cases are also brought to them. It doesn't seem as if the Coalition engaged with this as a mechanism although it could have provided another opportunity at the local level to ensure solutions found to protection cases are always in the child's best interests and in line with accepted standards.

3.5 INCREASED CHILD PARTICIPATION IN AWARENESS-RAISING

Throughout the project there was a clear focus on engaging with children and working with them on campaigning and advocacy initiatives.

General observations on the inclusion of children in activities are explored in 5.2 below.

Two particular initiatives, the use of theatre and children's parliaments are described below but in addition children were included in training initiatives which they themselves welcomed. There are many examples of children being involved in popular campaigning initiatives including marches, "red-hand" events and so on, although it is far from clear what real impact some of these latter type of initiatives had either for the children involved or audiences (which themselves don't always seem to have been well defined).

What is said to have worked well in both Guinée and Côte D'Ivoire is a child-to-child approach where for example, with ARCPN and Coalition funding and support, a group of twenty children, including former child soldiers as well as other vulnerable children, were trained as 'outreach workers' who talk about their experiences in schools and with local authorities.

Theatre

In both Guinée and Côte D'Ivoire, the Coalition worked with children and theatre.

In Bloléquin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Coalition worked with a theatre group itself part of a Save the Children project (support for which was due to end in June). The group is made up of approximately 16-20 vulnerable girls, the majority of which had been sexually abused by state agents, armed groups and/or UN peacekeeping troops.

The girls would pick a topic for a play which was developed with local staff who explained how the girls are not necessarily affected by the topics they depict but pick subjects they know are problematic in their communities. This has included issues such as rape and female circumcision for example. Theatre would be used as a mechanism of support for each other but has developed into performances for the local community and authorities to 'raise awareness' of such issues. This included a performance in, Abidjan, in front of government officials and the international community to advocate for action to be taken against

perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers. This is reported to have had quite an impact and led to a vigorous debate among those who witnessed it.¹²

The Coalition supported the theatre through a small grant apparently used for equipment, food and travel. At least six or seven plays have taken place since the Coalition's support was received at the end of 2008, one of which was on the issue of child soldiers. For the smaller plays in Bloléquin about 30 people attend, including *chefs de quartier*, village leaders and parents generating what is described by those involved as very positive debate and discussion.

The Coalition's support to the theatre group was very small and the performances would still have taken place without Coalition support. However, according to local *éducateurs sociaux*, the Coalition's support gave it "much more impetus". Although in itself no doubt a valuable initiative, it is worth noting that it seems only one of the plays was directly on the topic of this project.

The girls themselves (although perhaps 'prepped' for interviews) seem to value the plays but expect bigger results than they get although also believe their work has led to a reduction in FGM and rape.

In Guinée, theatre was used by ARCPN, as a recreational activity for children in their care. Following a theatre performance of a group of former child soldiers about their lives in 2007, the Coalition suggested theatre could also be used for awareness-raising with decision makers and local communities. Run along similar lines to that in Côte D'Ivoire, and organised with ADDEF, ARCPN children performed plays for NGOs, local authorities and the community mainly in schools and around key dates such as Day of African Child.

Direct impact seems to have been significant with the children (Liberian refugees) becoming more accepted in the host communities and, according to the Project Manager and backed-up by other interviewees "*former child soldiers were immediately invited to join youth activities in the host communities, and child protection committees very quickly mobilised themselves to ensure protection of the children and youth, solving problems pragmatically and directly*".

Children's Parliaments

Less successful was the Coalition's engagement in 'Children's Parliaments' in Guinée and Côte d'Ivoire towards supporting them to become more active in advocating for the prevention of recruitment.

In Côte d'Ivoire, it was agreed to provide financial and technical support to an initiative of Save Sweden to a support a country-wide Children's Parliament (PECI) setting up four new sections in the west of the country with child parliamentarians trained on procedures for democratic elections and child rights.

PECI comes under the remit of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs (MFFAS), but are lobbying to become autonomous. They have been supported by Save UK and Sweden as well as UNICEF. The president and ex coordinator of PECI describe the organisation, based in Abidjan, as having eight sections nationwide, focusing on different themes with eleven further "delegations" including that in Man for which the coalition provided support but is now described by others as existing 'on paper only'.

Members of PECI did participate in some activities with the Coalition including events on 16 June 2008 in Abidjan (with the NGO Forum and Save) and meetings between children and parliamentarians on child recruitment which they describe as a positive experience despite MPs not being able to answer their questions. They developed a proposal to hold a national forum for children in August and plan to identify key priorities to present to the presidency and would have welcomed further coalition support.

¹² The Coalition Project Manager wanted this play to be repeated in Man, opposed by Save the Children who considered it too sensitive with a potential to put the girls at risk. Again, in the overall relationships with Save in this project, some problems of communication and planning were reported.

Although those involved with PECl we met in Abidjan were credible individuals, the Coalition Project Manager describes a situation where the new child parliamentarians “*did not show any initiatives, did not participate in any activities, or in trainings provided by the Coalition for the Child Protection Network*”.

Save the Children in September 2008 pulled out of the project with the result that the Coalition was not in a position to implement planned activities.

It was recognised that capacity building for these children needs to be constant and continuous and the Coalition was not able to provide such intensive support and had set too ambitious objectives.

4. Work with Partners

4.1 SAVE THE CHILDREN

Save the Children-UK and Sweden are key throughout this work, not only as the organisation that hosted the Coalition’s Project Manager but also in the selection of partners (“*we took Save’s as our own*”), and in the identification and delivery of activities, many of which were seen as part of or at least complementary to larger Save projects.

Save the Children is formally a member organization of the Coalition at the international level. It is felt by the Coalition that this may have resulted in a “blurring of the edges” between the two organizations, with Save staff frequently perceiving the Coalition’s purpose as to develop areas of its work it did not have the resources to carry out, for example research on areas in which they needed “increased knowledge” as discussed in 3.3 above.

The Coalition themselves further suggest that a lack of clarity internationally (in terms of the Coalition’s core purpose and its relationships with its members) contributed to lack of clarity on the ground amongst Coalition and Save staff.

Those involved in setting up the project envisaged a relationship of complementarity with each organization providing its particular expertise in support of common goals. Save the Children (in Côte d’Ivoire for example) are working on a protection framework for children with the Coalition leading on that part that relates to conflict. Save the Children in the region has a ‘programmatic’ focus and the Coalition could bring an advocacy one (including, it was suggested, being able to base advocacy messages on programmatic experience and being able to say things those who need to protect their programmes might not comfortably be able to) and an approach grounded in the framework of international law. However, effective complementarity was not always achieved in practice.

Several respondents from both Save-UK and Sweden were positive about the value-add the coalition did and could bring but this was not universal with one respondent suggesting that neither did Save-UK add much value to the Coalition nor did the Coalition add much value to Save-UK at field level. On the other hand, a previous manager from the coalition in London was keen to point out that “*When I went to Côte d’Ivoire, only then did I realise what we were doing, incorporating [our work] in Save’s. It only made sense when I saw it*”.

Save the Children staff who were involved in coalition activities praised much of the work but again overall concern was expressed about coordination, communication joint planning and formal agreements.

The Project Manager also expressed frustration that follow-up on joint activities was not always a priority for Save-UK leading to delays, for example with the work in Bloléquin. Two significant Save-led projects in Côte

d'Ivoire to which the Coalition planned to contribute (strengthening the Children's Parliament and supporting two theatre groups in the North) were cancelled when Save reviewed their priorities, leaving the Coalition with no option than to revise plans. In Guinée, the Coalition worked with Save-US who unfortunately closed their office in N'zérékoré.

While Save provided extensive – and welcome - office, logistical, technical and other support, the relationship was not without its tensions. Save the Children's presence in Côte d'Ivoire is split between Save-UK and Save-Sweden (with Save- UK working in the west and Save Sweden in the East).¹³ The Coalition Project Manager post was based with Save- Sweden in Dakar Senegal, not one of the countries on which the work focussed in the bulk of the project. A MoU was also agreed with Save Sweden to provide space for the Project Manager to spend half her time in Côte d'Ivoire. The relationship with Save the Children's country director in Côte d'Ivoire however was problematic¹⁴ which led to more work being done with Save-UK. However, there was not an agreed MoU with Save-UK and a lack of joint planning which led to lack of clarity on expectations and some tensions in delivery. An example was quoted where Save-UK and the Coalition had planned training for the same time and same location with some of the same people invited to both, which clearly could not only have been avoided but synergies formed with minimal operational communication and coordination. It should also be noted that there was clearly tensions between Save-UK and Save-Sweden which clearly added to the difficulties of successful and open joint working.

In short, despite Save the Children support at a regional level, at a country-level, there was formal agreement and initial engagement in strategy development with Save-Sweden which was hampered by professional relationships and work with Save-UK hampered by the lack of prior planning and formal engagement.

Clearly, although some of the challenges were due to personal relationships, and it is possible that problems also arose through Save's assumptions or misunderstandings about the Project Manager's role more needed to be done to formalise relations with Save and it was suggested that this could be taken forwards internationally as well as on a project-basis.

Some of these aspects are explored further below when looking at the Coalition's local working (4.8)

4.2 NGO FORUM (Côte d'Ivoire)

NGO Forum is a coalition of 50 NGOs (described as a 'Child Protection Network'), established in 1996, working on child rights. Based in Abidjan but committed to increasing membership in other areas. It is supported financially and technically by Save-Sweden.

Coalition support provided to the NGO Forum included training on Paris Principles, paying for six NGOs from the north and west of Côte d'Ivoire to participate in a one-week training on child rights in Abidjan (as part of supporting the NGO Forum's expansion beyond Abidjan); financially supporting the executive secretary to travel to Burundi for a conference on child DDR; and training to ten of the NGO Forum's members on advocacy for the ratification of the Optional Protocol.

¹³ Save-UK and Sweden are apparently moving towards a unified presence with some changes in staff which might ameliorate some of these concerns should the work continue.

¹⁴ It was not possible to interview Save's Côte d'Ivoire Country Director for the evaluation but she was reported as complaining that she didn't understand the Coalitions role (although the Coalition's Programme Manager had visited to discuss the project).

Through Coalition support the NGO Forum itself provided training to the Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims on child rights and children in armed conflict.

In particular, from training provided in January 2008, participating NGOs drew up and implemented an advocacy campaign plan for the OP, described as working on several levels: direct advocacy with the Government (Ministries, General Assembly, and the President's office); An event with a children's caravan (including T-shirts, banners with red hands etc); and concert for 16 June; a petition asking the relevant national authorities to finalise the ratification of the OP and distributed across the country with teams sent out to key places to explain the OP and ask NGOs and others to sign (these were due to be presented to the MFFAS but it was unclear if this had happened at the time of interviews).

An impressive amount of activity seems to have occurred along these lines (much of which was also financially supported by Save-Sweden) which reached people from ministries and local media including a session at the National Assembly during which children presented the OP, which was said to have received lots of attention.

Thirty children have been trained by the NGO Forum (through the Children's Parliament) to go out to local neighbourhoods, committees and schools which according to them has had a strong impact and *"strengthens children's self-respect and self-worth and helps them take responsibility for issues that affect them"*.

The NGO Forum was clearly disappointed that the partnership with the Coalition has come to an end. They describe it as working well and that they achieved a lot through its support, not least drawing (government and UN bodies¹⁵) attention to the OP which was the main objective of their project with the Coalition.

An interesting challenge described by leaders of the NGO Forum involves member organisations not always understanding what their objective was and why they were focussed on one main advocacy campaign and organisations not being used to working together and preferring to set their own objectives.

The advocacy project is described as being 'open ended'. However, the NGO Forum themselves indicated that more funding was needed to see the project through to the end and it would seem that such campaigning needs to be seen through to ratification and not come to an end at an otherwise arbitrary date.

Feedback from others on the work of the NGO Forum and their commitment to the OP campaign is on the whole very positive although some concern was expressed by Save the Children as to the quality of reporting.

4.3 ROPERM (Côte d'Ivoire)

ROPERM was born out of a training programme by the Coalition for local NGOs in February 2008 in Man where, at the request of the Coalition, Save- UK invited local NGOs, PNRRC, local government authorities and the child focal points of the *Forces Nouvelles* to a training on legal framework governing children and armed conflict with a special focus on the Paris Principles, with a view to form a (loose) network that could carry out sensitisation work.

The Coalition provided ROPERM with training on child rights and legal framework and advocacy; coordinated a mapping of child service providers; support for advocacy and awareness raising events on 16 June and 10 December 2008 including some money. There is clear concern reported with ROPERM and financial

According to the NGO Forum, UNICEF has now incorporated OP ratification into their strategy but we were unable to speak to UNICEF in Abidjan to explore this.

management and accountability and access to funding may have underlied many of the internal frustrations described below.

Although described as a 'Child Protection Network', the president of ROPERM too describes its main objective as OP ratification.

There were already several protection mechanisms in place in Côte D'Ivoire. In particular, the *Groupe Sectoriel de Protection* in Man coordinated by MFFAS and supported by UNICEF who however note a need for increased collaboration and coordination.

National NGOs apparently felt that a purely local network would ensure sustainability and allow all aspects of child protection issues to be integrated. A view supported by some from International NGOs who argued that a separate independent civil society network was needed.

ROPERM has common membership with the *Groupe Sectoriel de Protection* and others describe it as a duplication and suggest it would have been preferable to work through and support existing structures.

In addition, many organizations appeared under ROPERM who had previously been "blacklisted" from the *Groupe Sectoriel*, damaging its credibility as a network.¹⁶

ROPERM was set up with *Ide Afrique*, an established and respected local organization working with orphans and vulnerable children. Dr Ives Koussan of Ide Afrique took the lead as president of ROPERM (although it is unclear how formal this appointment was) and it is described as working well under his leadership with the Coalition's support and as it evolved other organizations were invited to join but it remained an informal network.

After two three-day training sessions, the Coalition supported their first joint activity, the celebration of the International Day of the African Child (16 June) with the theme 'Prevent Child Recruitment' for which ROPERM members made red hand banners with the children in their care. According to the project manager, the event was partly successful with community members and local and international organisations (including ONUCI and UNICEF) attending, but very few local authorities.

It was decided that another event would be held on the 20 November (International Day of Child Rights, which would include a caravan of children and their carers to the offices of all national authorities.

Internal problems started however when some partners pushed for registration for ROPERM as a body. In October 2008, ROPERM elected a new President and *conseil d'administration*. This is clearly a serious bone of contention among those involved. Apparently Dr Koussan and Board were not present for the elections, the Coalition was not informed and partners including *Force Nouvelle* representatives, PNRRRC and international NGOs (Caritas, Save the Children) were excluded from voting. Apparently children were present during heated discussions which they found off-putting.

Several organizations remain disillusioned by the process, pointing out the lack of transparency, questioning the need to replace the previous leadership, suggesting board members were motivated by potential financial benefit.

Others outside (from national and international organizations) describe ROPERM as being un-transparent and beset with internal bickering and competition among NGOs generating friction and having a negative impact.

¹⁶ One member used to be a SC-UK partner and misspent funds. Some do not have an office and are not recognized by the government

Following the elections, Dr Koussan has not remained involved. It is suggested that he was no-longer interested and that the current president decides on who represents constituent organizations, excluding Dr Koussan from continuing to represent Ide Afrique.

Following this, the Project Manager reported a communication breakdown with no replies to messages relating to continued preparations for the planned event on 20 November which in the end did not happen. The Coalition considered stopping support to ROPERM at this point, but after a meeting at the end of November all participants wanted to continue on the planned activity and it was decided to hold the event on 10 December where according to ROPERM, caravans were organised and children carried banners around town. One of the lawyers among the NGOs also talked about the Paris Principles and 1612. Concern was expressed however about the funds for the event arriving late.

Both the 16 June and 10 December events were considered a success by those involved as it brought lots of children¹⁷ together with messages to present to communities around ratification of the OP. However as the ROPERM president himself acknowledges *“Although the celebrations went well, it is hard to see what impact there is longer term as this would require considerably more work done on it and at different levels (e.g. targeting authorities). The fact that it was the first time that NGOs came together to raise awareness on this particular issue is, however, very positive”*. This valuable reflection is pertinent to many of the activities throughout the project.

There was a plan drawn up under the previous director to hold an activity in Danane (north of Man, where an alleged 600 children were recruited into armed forces and groups) on 12 of February. However, after losing confidence in the accountability of the new ROPERM board, the Coalition decided to withdraw further support.

It was suggested that the Coalition’s involvement may have exacerbated the situation earlier with the Project Manager’s visible support to Dr Koussan before and after the elections. However, with the polarized and politicized nature of the debate it is hard to draw firm conclusions on the detail of the controversy. The general lessons for network formation and maintenance might however be clearer. The Project Manager stressed that the Coalition did not stimulate the establishment of an official network with statutes, an office and with a need for continued institutional funding. As there is already a child protection forum run by UNICEF in Man, the objective was for a more informal structure of local NGOs, in which local government and military authorities and service-providers were also represented, to receive joint capacity building and carry out advocacy.¹⁸

It does not appear that ROPERM has been active recently with no news since 10 December. It is also questionable what if any impact they achieved to date.

It seems unlikely that ROPERM will survive without support from the coalition which would be welcomed by some stakeholders although others have pointed to a place that such a network could fill – albeit with the right members and appropriate governance, management and accountability structures.

4.4 COLTE (Guinée)¹⁹

Save-Sweden initiated the creation of a network of child-rights NGOs in Guinea (COLTE). COLTE changed its statute to include the general protection of children in armed conflict, which enabled them to work on child

¹⁷ At least 500 in both events that ROPERM NGOs work with - mostly children affected by conflict including some that had been associated with fighting forces

¹⁸ Although this level of formality was not necessarily anticipated and might not have been desirable it is also worth nothing that Save and others would not be able to work with ROPERM without such formal registration.

¹⁹ It was unfortunately not possible to speak directly to key figures in COLTE during the field interviews for this evaluation.

soldiers. As a result they now have the ratification of the Optional Protocol incorporated in their Action Plan for 2009.

The Coalition Project Manager describes collaboration with COLTE as a success. The coalition was involved in recruiting a coordinator for the network which it funded from 1 April to 30 June 2009 after which Save took on funding.

4.5 SABOU GUINÉE (Guinée)

Sabou Guinée are a firmly established NGO with a presence in Guinée Forestière and N'zérékoré. Supported by Terre des Hommes, Save-Sweden, UNICEF and others but reported as still being poorly-resourced. They implement projects for vulnerable children, including child soldiers, with expertise in reunification and reintegration.

The Coalition supported Sabou Guinée with training on the Paris Principles in Abidjan and N'zérékoré and was involved in specific training on interview techniques and research methodology for the project on cross-border recruitment described in 3.3 above.

Sabou Guinée report that with coalition funding they have, over two days, trained 25 military and political authorities on child protection and Paris Principles (which the coalition helped with). Have also taken the training provided by the coalition to other local NGOs including ADDEF and ARCPN below, who were themselves involved in public activities on 16 June activities (funded by the Coalition), but which Sabou Guinée describe as '*small scale*' and '*could have been better*'.

A video camera was made available by the Coalition to make a documentary to complement the research undertaken with Save but which was not then made "*due to other priorities and lack of human resources*".

In addition, the Coalition provided Sabou Guinée with a laptop and digital camera to support creation of an electronic database of protection cases although there is no information on the status of this initiative.

Sabou Guinée is however planning to publish a number of reports, including that on cross-border research, for donors and to support programme implantation.

According to the Project Manager, cooperation with Sabou Guinée in N'zérékoré was however fruitful although "*they were so sought after, that our small contributions to their programme became less and less a priority for them, leaving the planned project unfinished*". Save Sweden is understood to be providing further support.

4.6 ARCPN and ADDF (Guinée)

A community-based organisation created from the refugee committee in one of the Liberian refugee camps in Guinea,²⁰ ARCPN work with young refugees. Their target group now consists mainly of children and youth formerly associated with armed groups. Beginning with Liberian children (girls and boys) work has expanded to include Ivorian and Sierra Leonean children who joined their psychosocial and vocational training programme provided to more than 100 former child soldiers, boys and girls.

Initially supported by Save the Children US (who closed their office in 2008) they are reported as being very dynamic but with a need for more institutional capacity building to help with strategy and project management. They raise money through membership and income generating activities.

²⁰ Note that Liberians can be stigmatised and marginalised in Guinea and can be seen as "*the people who bought war to the country*" and at risk of being accused and arrested for being rebels.

ADDF, who are mainly focussed on child trafficking, work with ARCPN and Sabou Guinée who use their strong links with the education system.

The Coalition supported ARCPN through working sessions to improve their planning, proposal writing and reporting, 'advocacy and awareness raising'; A small generator to facilitate their awareness raising activities and 'supported income generation activities'; Training on Paris Principles and children in armed conflict; and 'financial and technical support' for three consecutive projects: 1 - Advocacy events with authorities (in March and June 2008). 2 - Training of young journalists, and 3 - Capacity building of local community leaders and awareness-raising in schools and communities.

With support from the Coalition, ARCPN organised trainings on child rights and the Paris Principles, theatre and film performances for community leaders. One result of which was the child protection committees described above (3.4).

The Coalition also funded ARCPN's training programme for forty former child soldiers to make radio programmes carried out by a professional journalist and broadcasts to reach remote communities in the N'zérékoré region on child rights and how communities can protect their children, report violations and act on them. It hasn't been possible here to judge the impact of all these activities or the coalitions support to them.

The successful work with ARCPN and ADDF on theatre is described above (3.5) although it is again worth noting that only a small part of this was directly about the Coalition's primary focus on child soldiers.

ARCPN were also involved in activities for 16 June under Sabou Guinée's direction. (Although again, Sabou Guinée themselves were concerned that these events were too small scale and spread out rather than a central focussed event to which people could be invited and which would have attracted attention.)

According to the Project Manager, ARCPN has delivered projects to a high standard meeting and even surpassing objectives. They managed to obtain concrete commitment of child protection committees to resolve problems created or suffered by their target group. ARCPN reports that thanks to work with the Coalition they have established a good relationship with local authorities and generally a better level of acceptance with Liberian children able to move more freely and be less stigmatized.

In the work of ARCPN the direct impact on children is notable; not least the increased acceptance in communities of otherwise marginalised children. The Coalition was apparently the sole external source of funding and it is probably safe to assume made a real contribution to their successful work. The role of the Coalition however generally in providing such grassroots support is a bigger question.

4.7 PARTNERSHIP MODELS

The project was designed at a time when the Coalition was prioritising the establishment of regional structures globally and the initial phase of the project was clearly based around setting up a new structure with a network of community-based organisations to be formed in the region.

The Year One Annual Monitoring Report notes "*The West Africa Network ... still needs a lot of support to successfully establish itself...*" and "*The needs are greater than the Coalition's capacity*".

It was at this point that the project was reviewed and an approach taken of working with existing structures, networks and directly with local NGOs. The Coalition describes generally having found that regional, and to some extent national, structures didn't prove sustainable and no longer works to that model. This is also described as a move towards being more 'objective-focussed' but one doesn't necessarily follow from the other. A logical chain of planning might run: What's needed (the *objective*) ⇒ What *activities* are needed to achieve that ⇒ *Who* needs to (or is best placed to) act ⇒ Are (new) *structures* needed to deliver those

actions? But, this needs to be matched with the capacity and expertise needed to set up and maintain organisations which as noted are not negligible.

Participating NGOs and structures were initially identified by the Coalition’s founding partners who already collaborated with them. This made sense within an implicit or explicit model of change where the Coalition would provide specific expertise on children and armed conflict to NGOs that were already supported by international child protection agencies. Many partners were ‘inherited’ from Save the Children which might have both positive and negative implications. At one level it allows the integration of the work within a broader programme but on the other hand, as seen, makes progress very dependent on the relationship with Save the Children itself and might perhaps exclude other collaborators including potentially those already having a more human-rights or advocacy focus.

The most critical partnership is of course that with Save the Children itself. It might be interesting to look at some of the frustrations (and benefits) expressed with regard to the relationship with Save as being analogous to the perceptions other local NGOs might have of the Coalition, including in terms of relative ‘power relations’.

The findings of the evaluation reinforce the perception of the Project Manager in that working with existing coalitions of NGOs such as the NGO Forum and COLTE who had been supported by other international players and had a strong institutional capacity was more successful. Others were identified as needing more institutional capacity building which the Coalition with limited time, presence and resources was not in a position to provide even if it was judged to be an appropriate intervention. This highlights a key question as to if any relationship is understood – by all partners – to be project based or ongoing.

The experience with ROPERM is a telling example. Although not necessarily intended to have developed into a formal organisation, a certain momentum seems to have led towards this after more informal beginnings which is when problems started. It might be hard to avoid this natural progression elsewhere.

Local partners in Guinée and Côte d’Ivoire however clearly valued the collaboration with the Coalition and the way in which the work was approached with flexibility, support for their ideas and space for initiative.

In this project many different models are described as having been tried: formal networks, informal relationships, working through International NGOs and so on with more or less success. In describing such work, considering future initiatives and not least ensuring expectations are understood, it might help to be clear about which of the following typology of organisational relationships is appropriate or expected.²¹

Type	Relationship	Level of integration
Networking	Informal relationship based on exchange of information and other resources without commonly defined mission, structure or planning	LOW
Cooperation	Informal relationship involving some planning and joint activity and addressing short term focused goals. Each party remains independent.	
Partnership	More formal relationship, with communication channels, joint planning and action, negotiated roles, longer term goals, some sharing of resources, risks and rewards. Authority usually remains with individual parties: can be joint, can be vested solely in partnership	
Coalition	Less formal relationship with joint planning and action, sharing of resources, risks and rewards. Focus on short term efforts addressing common issues. Shared authority regarding coalition activities	HIGH

²¹ Taken from *Evaluating Collaborations: Challenges and Methods*, Ellen Taylor-Powell and Boyd Rossing.

Collaboration	More durable and pervasive relationship across diverse parties. Develop commitment to common mission. Focus on longer term efforts and system change. Pooled resources, shared products. Authority vested in collaborative structure.	
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4.8 THE COALITION AS A LOCAL PARTNER

“The Coalition was more about an individual than an organisation” (Save the Children staff member)

There is inevitably a challenge with local staff, working on their own, feeling (and being) part of an organisation with all that entails from management support and guidance, and familiarity with policies and practices to being part of an ‘organisational culture’. There was regular communication with the local Project Manager although conference calls were difficult and some meetings in London as well, at least in the early stages of the project, visits from London managers to the field. It was also suggested however that greater support and direction to regional work from London was needed.

With the necessarily close, although problematic, relationship with Save the Children and in the absence of being immersed in one’s own organisational culture day-to-day as above, it is perhaps natural that the activities tended towards capacity building, training and local support, particularly when one comes from that professional background rather than a human-rights research or advocacy one, perhaps more in tune with how the Coalition secretariat works.

Related to this is the observation from several respondents that, despite the tensions described above, it wasn’t clear to others that the Coalition’s Project Manager was not a Save staff member and a concern centrally that blurring of lines with Save the Children led to the child soldier message getting lost in work with local authorities.

The coordination and communication with the Project Manager locally was praised although it was also suggested that having someone more permanently in the area would have enhanced monitoring and ensuring follow-up. Not having a permanent presence in the countries in which the main activities were carried out certainly hampered communications as well as ‘visibility’ and representation in relevant meetings and fora. It could be argued however that if the approach was as described elsewhere to build capacity for self-sustaining organisations, such 24/7 presence should not be required and might even be counter-productive if partners come to rely on support that will no longer be there once the project comes to an end.

These are important considerations related to the larger question as to what extent the Coalition should pursue this or other models of fieldwork also mentioned below.

The Coalition recognises the difficulties arising from remote management, which they identify as including lack of clear internal policies and lack of a coherent Coalition-wide strategic vision, all of which they report steps that are underway to remedy.

It should be noted however that we heard from partners some very positive feedback for the way the Project Manager worked on the ground, in particular how she networked and supported partners in a collegial fashion.

5. Observations on Activities

There were clearly a large number of activities under the project carried out by the Coalition and with or through partners: media work, lobbying, public campaigning, research and so on.

On the whole, those activities that were undertaken seem to have been managed satisfactorily although some partners expressed frustrations with delays, including in receiving money. (A parallel again can be drawn with some of the Coalitions' parallel frustrations with Save the Children.) There was also, as mentioned elsewhere, a feeling expressed that more follow-up from individual activities would have been welcomed. Local partners also expressed some concern that activities – e.g. the Red Hand campaign, ended 'abruptly'. There was clearly a change towards the end of 2008/early 2009 as the project entered its final phase, which suggests that perhaps more attention or capacity should have been paid to a managed 'exit' from the Coalition's part of the work.

5.1 TRAINING, 'AWARENESS-RAISING', 'ATTITUDINAL CHANGE' AND 'CAPACITY BUILDING'

The activity reports reflect a sizable body of training sessions delivered under the project. Topics appear mainly to have focussed on international standards including the Optional Protocol, Paris Principles and 1612 mechanism with some 'training for trainers' and specific training in support of the research project on cross-border recruitment and some on more general organisational development for at least one partner.

The bulk of the training was for local civil-society organisations but Save Sweden also participated in training on the legal framework which they recognise as having *"really strengthened the child protection team"*.

Noted outcomes of training sessions with civil society include the creation of ROPERM and the NGO Forum campaign on OP ratification as well as momentum for further training including that then delivered by partner organisations. Participants praised the training received which was often described as helpful and clarifying issues on which they previously only had a sketchy understanding - *"people often embark on a campaign without fully understanding the issues themselves"*. In particular, it is noted the style of the sessions was clearly one that worked for participants with interviewees describing courses as very clear, interactive and participatory. *"Normally training is very formal and you sit in a room and take notes as if you were in school. Dee's training was different."* The inclusion of children in training sessions was also noted as welcome by many participants.

Training sessions were also provided for government and armed groups including the Force Nouvelles in Côte d'Ivoire and police and military in Guinée. The latter of which generated one small yet powerful indicator of impact where, according to the local partner, *"one policeman at a border helped get a child working alongside the checkpoints back to his family because he had been in the training"*.

Local authorities and community leaders were also exposed to training sessions provided by or with the support of the Coalition. In fact many other respondents pointed to authorities as being key targets as *"they often do not know what they're talking about"*.

Although the quality of individual training events is notable as outlined above, there is again some question as to the strategic context within which training programmes were identified and delivered. It is not clear what if any systematic needs assessments were conducted before setting up training programmes and respondents noted that they weren't asked in advance about what training support they needed. It is not clear to what extent individual sessions were followed-up, a weakness identified by some participants.

Attitudinal Change

Similarly, the awareness-raising (or 'sensitisation') events, particularly the use of theatre involving children were praised by many respondents from NGOs and local leaders who recognised the level of understanding in communities and theatre as a great way of getting the message across particularly through children themselves.

Impact here is of course very hard to measure, but local educators and NGOs in many of the locations where plays were performed, some who spoke to audience members after, did talk about families starting to think

about their child differently. It is worth noting however that they also described a context (for the use of plays generally) where “other NGOs follow-up on the issues”²² again highlighting the need to see such interventions within a broader strategic context. There are also challenges with getting the message this way to some key audiences including local authorities who frequently didn’t attend planned events. As one local NGO interviewee summarised “*There was some impact because those involved on the day are more aware of child soldiering issues and their attitudes change but it would be very difficult to measure the impact on a longer-term basis because they were one-off activities and there was no follow up*”. Others favoured more 1-1 engagement, particularly with community leaders who – as can other NGOs – then provide a multiplier effect reaching larger numbers through the most appropriate interlocutor.

In N’zérékoré, where such activities were carried out with ARCPN with the particular issue of the marginalisation of Liberian children, many but not all of who were child soldiers, local leaders and school officials as well as the NGO reported clear positive change as a result “*Even a little sensitization has seen people accept Liberian people more*”. Again however, there is clearly more that is needed and although some local officials (*Chef de Quartier*) attended coalition-supported training by ARCPN, there was again a challenge reported in getting leaders to attend broader ‘sensitization’ events.

The role of training and other interventions

The Coalition’s work, particularly although not exclusively, in west Africa was described as focussing very heavily on training and awareness-raising but without perhaps a fully articulated understanding of how this fits within broader national and international strategies. As the Coalition as an organization has evolved and accumulated experience through its relationships with partner NGOs, it describes itself as primarily an advocacy organization, which supports coalitions of local NGOs (usually those working directly with children) to strengthen their capacity to carry out research and advocacy locally and nationally (and ultimately internationally in collaboration with International Coalition). The secretariat has increasingly come to consider that capacity-building should be focussed on those areas where it is assumed the Coalition can bring otherwise missing expertise.

Although there may not be an easy dividing line between ‘training’, ‘awareness raising’, ‘attitudinal change’ (or ‘sensitization’ as many referred to it) and ‘capacity-building’ there are differences that are important to have in mind when planning such interventions (and more broadly when considering ones ‘model of change’).

Whereas **training** can be understood as the “*acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skills and knowledge that relate to specific useful competencies*”, ‘**Capacity Building**’ is normally taken to be more and understood as “[The] process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world.”²³ As such as well as human resource development (which may be delivered through training) it also encompasses Organisational Development and development of the Institutional and Legal framework.

In particular, this expanded understanding of capacity-building suggests a more intensive, longer-term, approach with a broader range of support than just training, and perhaps a much more considered selection of partners than would be needed for those who were just be the recipients of training for short-term collaboration.

²² One of the foci for such events in the area – outside this project – was on the female genital mutilation (FGM) where local educators did report noticing a drop in the number of girls being circumcised so clearly such an approach can work, at least when as part of a broader programme in the community.

²³ Ann Philbin, *Capacity Building in Social Justice Organizations* Ford Foundation, 1996

It should again be noted that more sustained follow-up was indeed identified as a need by many respondents.

When forming advocacy objectives that focus on individuals (including groups, communities etc) as a target it can be useful to determine if it is **knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviours**, that the intervention is targeted at changing, with each being perhaps progressively harder and dependent on the previous stage. Knowledge on its own is unlikely to lead to change unless it leads to changed behaviours.²⁴

Concern was expressed by the coalition centrally about the role training played and what it was designed – or did – lead to in this project. This should be seen in the context of a welcome and important discussion as to the Coalitions understanding of a ‘model of change’.²⁵

There is a role for national NGOs to engage in a dialogue with and provide information to government authorities (including members of the security forces) on child rights and protection principles. The Coalition’s support to national NGOs such as ARCPN in Guinea and NGO Forum in Côte d’Ivoire enabled and facilitated their collaboration with local authorities.

Towards the end of 2008 however, the Coalition secretariat took a policy decision not to carry out any formal training of security force officials. It was felt that such training would need to be endorsed by the leadership of the relevant institutions, carried out by relevant officials and sit within a broader strategy of Security Sector Reform.

The International Coalition has also now decided that any future training for NGO partners will be more closely linked to broader strategies designed to promote more effective work and greater impact.

5.2 WORKING WITH CHILDREN

As reflected above, working with children formed a core and valuable element of the Coalition’s work with a level of significant demonstrated positive impact, including for vulnerable children themselves.

It is worth however the Coalition reflecting further on its work directly with children. Children in this context are (or can be) targets of interventions, the ultimate ‘beneficiaries’, ‘rights-holders’ and/or channels for messages to be conveyed to others.

How for example, and on what basis, would the Coalition respond to children involved in theatre work requesting some form of remuneration for their involvement as was noted by ADDEF in Guinée?

It is interesting to note that the objective (no.5) relating to child participation refers only to their involvement in ‘awareness-raising’ (itself not otherwise an explicit objective) but not in other types of intervention. Indeed, although a very different approach is reported elsewhere in the project, in the work with (or ‘use of’) children for some public events such as marches there is both a question as to what extent the children understood the messages and if that message was then visible to decision-makers.

²⁴ Not explored further here, but some have argued that it is important to maintain a clear distinction between ‘education’ as a model of change and campaigning/advocacy – the former increasingly exploring complexity and uncertainties and the latter cutting through it. Again, relevant when thinking about implicit or explicit models of change including the relationship between an advocacy approach as compared to a ‘development’ one. See for example http://www.campaignstrategy.org/cr12_1.html and Rose, *C How to Win Campaigns*, Earthscan publications, 2005.

²⁵ There is a growing body of literature on the role of capacity-building in the development sector. It would no doubt be of value for the Coalition to learn from such debates to inform their developing models of change and toolbox of interventions.

An established model that might be useful for thinking about child participation suggests a number of 'degrees of participation' of young people in a project described as rungs on a ladder.²⁶ It might be worth asking on which rung parts of this work sat and to what extent that is appropriate:

8) **Young people-initiated, shared decisions with adults:** Projects or programs initiated by young people and decision-making shared between young people and adults.

7) **Young people-initiated and directed:** Young people initiate and direct. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.

6) **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people:** Initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the young people.

5) **Consulted and informed:** Young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults.

4) **Assigned but informed:** Young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.

3) **Tokenism:** Young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

2) **Decoration:** Young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.

1) **Manipulation:** Adults use young people to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people.

Child-protection is of course paramount and indeed at the heart of all the work. It is clear Save played a key role in ensuring the vulnerable children worked with weren't put at further risk.

A particular incident which arose in the course of this project was reported by Save which highlighted issues of respecting confidentiality and informed consent when dealing with child victims of sexual abuse. Save had concerns at how this was handled by the Coalition staff on the ground which have been shared with the Coalition Secretariat, and it is not necessary or appropriate to repeat the detail here.

The Coalition secretariat reports that it has become increasingly aware of the need to develop and implement an ethics policy and guidelines relating to its work with children, and their involvement in research, advocacy, media and other areas of the Coalition's work. A project towards this was initiated in September 2009.

5.3 INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Related to the questions running throughout this evaluation on strategies and approaches, there is a question as to what – if any – extent on the ground work was complemented with international advocacy from London or elsewhere (targeting donors, own government foreign policy and/or target governments directly).

Early stages of the project included advocacy with European donors and several initiatives were taken along these lines. The first year's Annual Monitoring Report describes this as "*starting to bear fruit*" with requests for input from EU institutions, embassies and donors.

The project Second Stage Report and Action Plan, from October 07, suggests that "*the Coalition has played a crucial role in raising awareness among stakeholders in Africa, Europe and North America* and noted that as the refugee crisis was officially over, UN agencies and others were planning to leave the country with a

²⁶ Hart, R. *The Theory And Practice Of Involving Young Citizens In Community Development And Environmental Care* UNICEF 1997. See, for example <http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm> (note there is debate about relative positions of rungs 7 and 8.)

dramatic decrease in the availability of funding for DDR programmes with an associated danger of future re-recruitment.

A plan was outlined to advocate for a more sustainable approach with donors and to '*Bring the voices of local NGOs to the European Union*' by supporting an advocacy mission on funding for humanitarian aid and reintegration programmes with members of the children's parliament and the national coalition. An advocacy trip to Europe was carried out in March and April 2006 and detailed discussions were held with a wide range of governments and donors to highlight the concerns raised in the Coalition's DDR survey. Meetings were held with the governments of Belgium, France, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden and the UK and EU institutions such as the Directorate General for External Relations and for Development at the European Commission, the European Commission Office for Humanitarian Aid and the Council of the European Union. However, a sustained strategy was not implemented and it isn't clear from the documentation why not.

Initially, the project also noted a need to increase the capacity for organisations to engage with international and national legal institutions and included as an objective sharing information and training with staff of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Special Court for Sierra Leone. The project Annual Report 07-08 notes plans for research on the Special Court and the impact of transitional justice mechanisms and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have in preventing future recruitment and use of child soldiers. Secretariat staff have clarified that this project, while located in West Africa, would have been carried out under the auspices of the Coalition's international program and does not fall into the remit of the West Africa Project.

5.4 TARGETS, ACCESS AND INFLUENCE

Many respondents (from local and international organisations) recognise that the Coalition was instrumental in bringing the issue of child soldiers to the forefront in at least the two countries on which the work focussed.

The coalition clearly had excellent relationships with **civil society** locally, as reflected throughout the report with an approach that – despite some frustrations on all sides – was welcomed.

Several respondents in the field addressed the need for different approaches however to get to **local authorities** who may not attend 'set piece' events.

It is also noticeable how activities included a variety of stakeholders from children to government officials, and **army and opposition group** figures with a reflection on the most appropriate channel to reach some harder groups.

However, it is again not always clear that the target for messages were picked strategically. There is clearly a challenge running through the work as to identifying who the target is: community, government, civil society and so-on. This is touched on below in the section looking at theories of change.

With government

In Côte d'Ivoire in particular, there were clearly some direct meetings with relevant government officials as detailed in the activity plan and certainly an internal perception of progress in getting the OP on the agenda towards ratification. It would unfortunately not possible through the evaluation to follow-up with key government figures to triangulate perceptions but contacts do suggest that the Coalitions direct networking with officials as well as support to local NGOs in their advocacy did help put the issue of child soldiers on the agenda with an increased understanding of the OP and some positive signs towards ratification as above.

Here as elsewhere there is a question about the underlying strategy. Throughout the project, it is not clear if there was a common understanding as to what extent OP ratification was a primary objective in itself

(towards which the Coalition would engage in direct advocacy) or a desired outcome of a the primary objective being increased capacity of local civil society. This potential confusion is reflected in the changing articulation of the project objectives as well as the nature of the interventions pursued on the ground.

It is clear that the Coalition has enhanced the NGO Forum's capacity to advocate with the government. However, it isn't always clear from documentation and interviews that there is a clear understanding of where in the government system the ratification process is and a lack of a clear underlying 'political strategy' based on an understanding of the decision-making process, key decision makers and channels of influence.

The coup in Guinée in late 2008 following a general period of instability has obviously changed potential direct advocacy with the authorities. However, it is interesting to note that several members of the new military leadership of the country had in 2007 received training from the Coalition and other NGOs on child rights and Paris. The spokesperson for the President, Captain Nouhou Thiam, was the Child Focal point of the regional military training programme of Save the Children Sweden in Guinea, who coordinated the Coalition's training of military border police in September 2007. As well as one would hope positively affecting the current government's practices in these areas, this should provide a solid basis for future advocacy by partners.

5.5 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Although a budgetary analysis is not within the remit of this evaluation,²⁷ several comments were made relating to the provision of small grants to partner organisations that were made throughout the project.²⁸

According to the Project Manager, the Coalition *"took a conservative approach ...we started with very small grants for small projects, and when the projects proved successful, and a reliable partnership was established, we augmented the grants and the scope of the project."*

In several instances, however the management of such grants might not always have been clear, including in knowing on what exactly small amounts of money were to be spent. This is compounded where the support to a local partner is also being channelled through Save the Children. In some instances there are reports that the late arrival of funding caused problems with the timely delivery of activities. More significantly, for example, there is a strong indication that the availability of funding was a factor in the problems with ROPERM.

It should be stressed that there is no suggestion of any financial impropriety; merely observations on the difficulties of managing a number of small grants with a number of organisations on one hand, and secondly the additional dynamics brought to any partnership relationship where the provision of funding is a factor and which does not always sit well with an approach that otherwise seeks a partnership of equals towards common goals.

6. Questions of Strategy

"Without us, what's happening now wouldn't be. Local Partners didn't have the capacity, internationals didn't have our objectives"

²⁷ Although, according to the Project Manager, overall spending remained within budget with the main expenditure on travel and training workshops.

²⁸ A previous misunderstanding in the Coalition secretariat about the need for funds to be channelled through grassroots organisations (which was not the case) was also a factor in the redesign of the approach after the first year of the project.

6.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

The initial project objectives were described²⁹ as “*based on a vision of the Coalition, through its regional structures, as an organisation that could coordinate and support its members’ activities³⁰ ... and enhance their work through ‘acting as a link’ with community-based groups*”. It was assumed that for example creating a mechanism of information sharing, capacity-building and collaboration between national and international NGOs and CBOs to facilitate cross-border DDR programmes, and ‘maximise synergies’ would lead to the repatriation of 1,000 and reintegration of 15,000 child soldiers.

However, it was realised that while campaigning for child soldiers and promoting best-practice for DDR, the Coalition does not on its own deliver programmes that would directly result in the successful reintegration or repatriation of identified groups of child soldiers.

The emerging strategy for the project was described as being based on the survey on the situation of former child soldiers in the region that was completed in the earlier phases of the project with the Coalition focussing on advocacy and awareness-raising for prevention of recruitment, seen as a gap on which no other international NGO or UN agency was specifically focussing. It is questionable to what extent some of the actual activities however followed this approach.

Although the project Second Stage Report and Action Plan does refer to the “*Development of a comprehensive 18 month strategy for the Coalition in West Africa*”, as noted, the articulation of the objectives changed through the project without necessarily a common understanding of their hierarchy, relative priority and inter-relationships and the work was said to be driven by activity-plans rather than such a strategy.

One attempt at a description of an overall strategy linking the various objectives is found in the handover notes from the previous Programme manager (in July 2008) where, in Côte d’Ivoire, the overall goal is given as the lead on issues relating to armed conflict within a Save-UK initiative to create a nation-wide child protection framework for monitoring, reporting and responding to violations. In Guinea, with more limited capacity of local NGOs the approach is described as similar but focussing on a smaller geographical area. In both, the objectives related to capacity building, child participation, child-protection frameworks are seen as contributions to the overall goal, with campaigning for OP ratification (an objective set with local partners), seen in the light of capacity building for partners’ campaigning rather than an overall objective in its own right. This doesn’t however seem to be so clearly set out in formal project documentation.

Underlying any strategy should be a ‘theory of change’: An (evidence-based) assumption on how the desired ultimate change we seek will happen. This will often sit at the organisational level rather than for each project with a clear understanding of the organisational ‘mission’, itself setting out how the Coalition would contribute to the broader change it seeks; its ‘style’ of working (including for example the extent to which it works in partnership); and the type of interventions in which it specialises.

The Project Annual Report for 2007-8 notes “*The Coalition’s added value is significant; we bring expertise in carrying out effective human rights advocacy to a network composed largely of operational programmes*’. However, it is not clear in some aspects of this project if the Coalition was always playing to that as strength.

As is seen, many of the activities were targeted at the community level and indeed the initial project proposal notes “*to a large degree, both the long-term and immediate causes of child recruitment in West Africa are found at the community level*”. The project manager also noted that “*Apart from advocacy for the ratification and implementation of international instruments, we have learnt that prevention should be the*

²⁹ Briefing Note for the Evaluation

³⁰ The ‘programmatically founding members’: Save the Children, Terre des Hommes and World Vision

main focus of the Coalition's work in West Africa. More attention should be paid to the root causes, on a cultural level, of recruitment in African countries." A view that was also reflected by others to whom we spoke.

It should be noted however that all of what's needed is not necessarily the same as what the Coalition is in the best position to provide. As a human rights organisation, the Coalition's starting point is about the responsibility of states. This is not to say that community work and empowerment is not part of a human-rights based approach as development organisations themselves have taken on, but it is questionable if the Coalition has the capacity to work at all these levels. The partnership with Save the Children should have allowed organisations to play to their strengths but it is possible that 'mission creep' led to the Coalition involving itself in more of the activities at the 'development' end of the spectrum, potentially at the cost to other potential interventions including research and national and international advocacy.

There is also the apparent absence of a clear 'political strategy' for achieving national policy change (and within which local and popular mobilization could be located). Without a common understanding on some of these issues there is a question as to if capacity-building (let alone training) is the most appropriate intervention.

Changes within the course of the project are not necessarily problematic and can rather be seen as a welcome reaction to changed circumstances and ongoing learning. Indeed in advocacy work, there is only so much at the activity level that can or should be set in stone in advance. Campaigning has been described as a 'conversation' (or perhaps argument) and one needs to see what moves your opponent makes before finalizing your next move and be ready to adapt to an environment that is not only changing but that you are seeking to change. But to manage this successfully and support associated decisions, one does need the framework of an overall strategy with clear objectives, anticipated steps on the path and an underlying 'theory of change' with an understanding of what's needed - and the approach you will take - to get identified audiences to act in the way you want.

The weakness in not following such an approach resulted in many activities being viewed centrally as potentially 'ad hoc' and not as a core part of the work. Furthermore, concern was expressed about 'scale'; the work being with small groups and which itself wasn't always sustained. *"No follow-up to hammer home the message"*.

This is not to say that a more community-focussed approach didn't have a measurably positive impact as seen in the work with ARCPN in Guinée for example but the bigger question for the Coalition, about which there are mixed views, is if this is the model the Coalition wants to follow and include in its overall mission.

6.2 GEOGRAPHY

In selecting where to focus, it is questionable to what extent decisions were made on the basis of identified need or rather were a result of initial work with Save-Sweden. For example it was suggested that in the initial phases the coalition was *"disconnected from Sierra Leone and Liberia so didn't consult properly"*. This is not to say that such decisions shouldn't also be informed by pragmatic considerations including the availability of (national and international) partners, but this should be explicit, not least so as to be able to explain the focus to other stakeholders. In future the Coalition needs to establish clear criteria for mapping its country work, based among others, on an assessment of needs on the ground, the presence or absence of other international and national actors, and detailed consideration of the nature of Coalition's particular contribution and capacity to deliver change.

Within countries, local respondents in Côte d'Ivoire (from local and international NGOs) pointed to the need to get out to the more remote rural areas. Similarly in Guinée it was questioned by a local official as well as NGO partners that there wasn't work in Lola as the most affected area but focussed on N'zérékoré rather than taking work to the more remote areas particularly near the border. A local official in Man made the

important observation that *“In some cases, children in remote areas are regretting the fact they did not join because all they hear is that former child soldiers have received a lot of support and benefits.”*

6.3 WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY AND NEED: TIMING

A key question for the Coalition is to what extent they stay engaged in post-conflict situations. The previous Programme Manager in his handover notes recalled that *“When we finally could work in the region [post conflict]... most of the international attention on the issue of child soldiers in the region had vanished”*.

Noting that many respondents weren't aware of the coalitions work prior to the phase when the Project Manager took over in the field, local interviewees felt the coalition “arrived too late” after the conflict. Again there is different emphasis in views with on one hand we hearing that *“it [The Coalition] should have been present and active as soon as the conflict ended rather than start activities when everything is calm and most of the children have been demobilised”* and on the other *“Time of peace is time to really do something”* although, with a focus on ‘prevention’ these aren't contradictory viewpoints.

6.4 FIELDWORK

It was questioned centrally if the Coalition should be undertaking this sort of community-based work at all. On one side is a question about potential impact, particularly for a research and advocacy (rather than development) organisation of its size and resources. However, it was also suggested that not only has the best advocacy been done with partners in the field but there is a real value add in being able to convey messages from the field to inform and enrich international policy agendas. This is a benefit of being an organization which is able to work internationally, nationally and locally, and develop collaborative partnerships with national and local NGOs.

It is clear though that building partnerships with local NGOs and engaging in community-based work is not easy, and it appears likely that the Coalition will require support from a larger organization playing a supporting role for the foreseeable future. Lessons to promote clarity and efficiency can be drawn from the experience with Save, as well as the more operational questions of remote management explored in part 4.9 above.

6.5 PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The key to Monitoring and Evaluation³¹ is firstly, having a clearly articulated set of objectives towards which progress is checked and evaluated (including the setting of measurable indicators of progress). However, as discussed elsewhere, although a number of objectives were set and to an extent progress can be seen towards them, a clearer overall strategic framework would have helped in the delivery, let alone evaluation of this work.

Secondly, maintaining records of activities, outcomes and to what extent is possible, impact (even if during the project attribution is not always clear). There is a wealth of documents available, particularly those drafted periodically for the funder. It was not however an easy task even to pull out from these a

³¹ **Monitoring** is understood as a continual process of gathering data on all elements of a chain of influence: what activities are undertaken what else is happening how the targets are reacting and how beneficiaries are affected. This data should then be used for ongoing reflection and adjustment to plans.

Evaluation is then a periodic process of reviewing the data and drawing conclusions from it to inform and modify plans; To learn from experience and improve future planning; For accountability to beneficiaries, partners and donors etc and ideally to motivate those involved and maintain their active involvement.

To this can be added **Impact Assessment** – a review as to what extent lasting change has been achieved through the work.

comprehensive list of activities and associated dates etc. An example where ‘less is more’ would have been helpful, including for those involved.

Thirdly, monitoring and evaluation are not activities that are divorced from implementation. It should help those implementing and managing the work adjust plans in the light of lessons learnt. At the macro-level, clearly significant changes were made, and to an extent documented after the first phase of the project, and adjustments made throughout at a micro-level. It might have been valuable however for an earlier mid-term review to have taken place, to step-back and ask at that point some of the questions that are now being raised, not least on the role of community-based attitudinal change.

At the micro-level, questionnaire-style evaluation forms were completed by participants at the end of training workshops and we are told that further trainings were adapted. However, end-of-course questionnaires (sometimes pejoratively referred to as ‘happy sheets’) are only one component, and a limited one, of evaluating capacity building initiatives and what seems to be missing is as more systematic initial needs assessment which would also have served as a basis for more intensive monitoring and follow-up. There does not seem to have been an equivalent attempt to, for example, rigorously monitor progress of the OP through the Côte D’Ivoire government bureaucracy and respond appropriately. Again and relating to the earlier point perhaps a result of not having a clear political strategy with associated indicators.

Monitoring and Evaluation is not an exact science with understood challenges of attribution and time-lag. For the former, one particular factor is disaggregating the Coalitions particular contribution from that of Save the Children within whose projects much of the work was undertaken. For the latter point, the Project Manager herself notes that “*The impact of the project would improve if we had more time to work closely with the partners, and build in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms over a longer period of time*”.

7. West Africa: Looking Forwards

7.1 CURRENT SITUATION³²

In Côte d’Ivoire, UNICEF with others (including Save-UK) have carried out joint verification missions and report no indication of child recruitment but have heard about young boys manning checkpoints which IRC is investigating but a need for more resources was flagged. Local respondents described the country as having a ‘very fragile peace with increasingly disgruntled soldiers’. A view echoed by UNICEF who in such a context would welcome more community sensitization about child recruitment. Our interlocutor in UNICEF is also pushing for them to follow up on the reintegration programme not knowing what has become of those who received support. Other local authority figures suggested a greater emphasis on reintegration with a danger that should fighting break out again, children who returned to nothing in their communities would be in grave danger of re-recruitment.

In Guinée however, the need is described as being even greater. UNICEF respondents point out that although there is no recruitment for now, child trafficking is a large problem and children could easily end up in fighting forces. The largest problem, according to UNICEF, is probably with paramilitaries particularly in Guinée Forestière and border areas (Lola in particular was mentioned) where the apparent power and money of the paramilitaries is attractive to young people, particularly those outside school or without family support. At the moment it was described as being a situation of being associated with these groups rather than children as combatants, and a problem of child exploitation rather than recruitment³³. However, these

³² This does not attempt a full description or contextual analysis but summarises input on these questions from those spoken to in the field.

³³ Trafficking of small arms was also highlighted as a major problem in the area.

issues were said to be not well documented, a needed task that would however carry serious risk. It was also pointed out by a local official that previous child soldiers who have now returned are over eighteen but in the absence of formal DDR programmes could easily be re-recruited should fighting break out.

7.2 IDENTIFIED NEEDS

When asked about the 'value add' the coalition could bring respondents from Save the Children in the region on one hand suggested that the coalition should focus at national, regional and 'strategic' international level and not seek to implement locally.

However, key needs identified also include recommendations to implementing agencies on reintegration programmes, more work on 1612, a database to support monitoring and prevention, work through child protection fora and lobbying for the children to be adequately provided for 'by the state, communities and families', the latter of which suggests a very local approach as do other suggestions made including a need to 'strengthen civil society' and more work directly with children, including through schools.

Both local and international respondents point to firstly the fact that no-one else is prioritising and/or has the expertise on the issues and secondly, the need to see all the above as 'prevention' work, felt to be critical in a fragile situation.

7.3 SUSTAINABILITY

Worries about sustainability of this project (and hence this type of work as a model) are high in the mind of current and former Coalition staff. In particular, with regard this project, we were told that an exit-strategy became a matter of concern in the course of the project with an identified need to link with someone who would stay longer but also an assumption that it didn't make the case for the Coalition's direct continuation.³⁴

Despite the Project manager explaining that *the "main objective was to build the capacity of local organisations and structures, to ensure that they have the tools to continue their work"*, with 'no-one else working on child soldier issues' many respondents on the ground expressed concern about the future for focussed work.

In **Côte d'Ivoire** there is an explicit understanding that Save-Sweden would continue with the work through their structures (a good reason for 'taking Save's partners as [the Coalition's] own'. Save-UK is no longer actively working on child soldiers but is part of the 1612 taskforce and they say they are pushing to keep on the agenda.

On the campaign for **OP ratification with the NGO Forum**, who should be in a good position to take forwards the advocacy, local partners expressed concern that it would be a year's worth of work wasted if it stopped now without seeing through to ratification and (equally as important) implementation. Save-Sweden is continuing to support the NGO Forum but no-one else is focussing on the campaign, and some concern as to the relative priority of this for Save. An argument could therefore be made for additional support in some form if this was possible.

It is less easy to make an argument for continued support to **ROPERM**. If it is to survive and flourish there is clearly a need for investment in restructuring and clarification of the nature of such a coalition and associated expectations. It was however suggested that their objectives could equally be incorporated into other existing structures. It is also hoped that even if it doesn't survive as a structure, those from civil society

³⁴ We were therefore careful not to generate unrealistic expectations with stakeholders during interviews which may have had the benefit of leading to more open reflections.

and other groups who participated will have benefited from some of the support given and will be in a better position to individually take forwards work for child soldiers.

It was hoped that the establishment of the **children's parliament** section in Man will be a first step towards empowerment for children in the region but without Save the Children support as described above, it is not at all certain that this initiative will take root.

The future of the girls' **theatre project in Bloléquin** is dependent on continued support from Save the Children. (It is unclear what their plans are with some references to the support being ended in June and elsewhere that it will be continued through 2009. Without Coalition impetus however, it should be far from assumed that child soldier issues will continue to feature in their activities.

In Guinée, Save-Sweden will continue to support **COLTE**, which is apparently working well, and the work the Coalition started with them on the OP. Save the Children will continue to fund the coordinator post which the Coalition had previously supported. UNICEF has also apparently pledged technical and financial support. There are plans to decentralise COLTE and bring to N'zérékoré but this hadn't happened at the time of interviews.

Sabou Guinée was already firmly-established, but in the absence of other international organisations it is important they are not 'left on their own'. Save-Sweden committed funding for staff to speed up delivery of the projects on which they are working and also apparently expressed interest in supporting the work started by the Coalition in N'zérékoré but this was not confirmed.

Certainly the project manager felt that long-term support to **ARCPN** would be valuable but also that *"the project will continue to have an impact for former child soldiers long after the Coalition's project in West Africa has ceased to exist."* Save Sweden were looking at if they could offer further support, but final information is not available.

8. Conclusions

Many respondents (from local and international organisations) recognise that the Coalition was instrumental in bringing the issue of child soldiers to the forefront, and despite the need, very few agencies were engaged in Child Soldiers work in either Côte d'Ivoire or Guinée.

The situation in the region has clearly hampered the planned work in many instances with a volatile situation in Côte D'Ivoire, political crisis and coup in Guinée and in Senegal the low intensity conflict in Casamance which, as well as changed plans of partners, led to work not being delivered as planned.

Despite the challenges outlined in this evaluation, both conceptual in terms of design and theory of change, changes in staff and approach and the mixed experience of working with Save the Children, many worthwhile activities were delivered which have gone some way to strengthening capacity of local organisations and through them both directly supporting beneficiaries and generating civil society action towards OP ratification.

The project has also however highlighted some lessons to take on board in the areas of partnership working, field work and the overall models of change to be pursued.

Strategically, weaknesses in a clearly articulated overall strategy driving the activities and, which is likely related, a noted lack of sustained follow-up to individual activities however hampered the chance of activities leading to measurable outcomes which themselves contributed to policy and practice change for the benefit of past or potential child soldiers.

Activities, including training workshops, were considered a success by those who participated and there is some indication that the results were taken on board in participants' work. Similarly, the community 'sensitisation' work seems appreciated by those who were involved. It is not however clear as discussed elsewhere how this fitted into the overall agreed strategy and with other activities was perhaps too piecemeal to have substantive input beyond a small number of people, particularly when local authorities and opinion formers were not directly exposed.

Should the Coalition continue work in the region prevention was stressed as being key. Any peace in the region is fragile and there is clearly expressed worry about the future. As mentioned elsewhere the windows of opportunity are seen to be in the period before conflict and post-conflict which itself can be seen as a preventative intervention in fragile areas. The Coalition could be in a strong position to build on what has been done but would need greater strategic and operational focus. The selection of partners would need review: potentially for example working with the NGO Forum on the Optional Protocol; work with Sabou Guinée and ARCPN in more remote areas and prevention work in Man (although probably not through ROPERM). Such decisions should however be taken in light of a refreshed strategy in light of progress made and broader situational context.

Operationally, the relationships with Save was clearly problematic. Had more investment been made in establishing plans and expectations with Save-UK and Sweden at the outset, this might have mitigated the challenges of individual relationships.

Working through **existing successful networks** and/or individual organisations is clearly preferable to setting up new structures. New coalitions or networks can come with a sizable transaction costs in coordination, governance and so on. Working with those already established – and hence already less reliant on coalition support – should also increase the chance for sustained work beyond the timeframe of a particular project.

The **bigger picture** questions in particular that arise when looking at tensions between community-level work and/or mobilisation towards national policy change and the Coalition's particular role, probably have a relevance beyond this one project and are for the Coalition centrally to continue to grapple with. It is welcome that this is a live conversation within the Coalition and we hope this review will contribute.

Appendix 1: Timeline and Key Events and Activities

The list below is based on activity reports and other documentation and on the whole validated through the field interviews. It is not necessarily comprehensive. As mentioned elsewhere, the project documentation, while extensive, does not aid a quick and comprehensive overview of all activities undertaken in the project. For this reason, there is a risk both of duplication in the list of activities below (where activities are described in more than one place) and activities not included below where the documentation was unclear or incomplete.

Some information on outcomes is indicated below (as drawn from project documentation and interviews). Further information and associated commentary on key outcomes of some of the activities is detailed in the main text. Political events including noted responses from government officials are highlighted in bold.

Dates	Focus	Activities, Outcomes and Milestones
2002	Regional	Exploratory mission to Liberia and Sierra Leone
2004	Project development	Coalition starts work in the region Consultant (Guillame Landry) hired for field mapping in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinée and Côte d'Ivoire Coalition Program Manager visits to negotiate initial MOU with Save the Children
June '05	Regional / Project Development	Mapping of child rights and DDR in West Africa Three year grant from Baring Foundation secured. Guillame L. starts as west Africa project manager
-- START OF YEAR ONE OF THE PROJECT --		
From July '05	Regional / Project Development	Start of original Barings-funded project Project Manager undertakes Advocacy on results of mapping with armed groups and governments in region and donors in Europe and North America. Some trainings for military, armed groups, government officials and journalists Director for the network then to be formed under the project retained (Christina Solomon)
November '05	Sierra Leone	Program manager mission to oversee formation of network and research on RUF use of child soldiers
December '05	Regional	Mapping exercise of programmes completed and report prepared. Began advocacy on basis of findings including at West African Expert Meeting for the Revision of the Cape Town Principles, held in Dakar. Several other advocacy events with partners, parliamentarians and civil society followed.
March-June '06	Regional	Three advocacy missions to European stakeholders

April '06	Regional	<i>West Africa Network of Community Based Organisations to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers</i> launched with approx. 15 organisations, based in Campaign for Good Governance, Sierra Leone. Training sessions and technical meetings held
June '06	Côte d'Ivoire	Project Manager advocacy mission to Côte d'Ivoire with local and international agencies. Training workshop for approx 15 members of <i>Force Nouvelles</i> .
	Project Development	Problems identified with the development of the network as originally conceived. Proposal to abandon approach of creating regional structure in favour of working directly with national partners. Number of countries reduced to three with priority to Côte d'Ivoire.
-- PROJECT YEAR 2 --		
July '06	Côte d'Ivoire	<i>General Assembly adopts law enabling to accede to OP</i>
	Regional	Summary document from mapping exercise <i>Call to Action</i> published with Save Sweden and used as basis for advocacy
Sept '06	Project dev't	Initial project manager finishes term
November '06	Regional	<i>Child Soldiers and DDR in West Africa</i> published
December '06	Project development	One year no cost extension agreed to project. Barings agrees changes to project and no cost extension of year 2 to March 2008
March '07	Côte d'Ivoire	<i>Peace agreement between government of Côte d'Ivoire and Force Nouvelle signed</i>
May '07	Project dev't	New Project Manager starts (Dee Wurth)
June '07 ³⁵	Guinée	Training for Sabou Guinée staff for research into cross-border recruitment (led by Save the Children consultant with support from Coalition Project Manager) Discussion on OP ratification with government of Guinée
-- PROJECT YEAR 3 --		
July-Aug '07	Côte d'Ivoire	Two workshops on Paris Principles (Majority of participants from national NGOs with local government and international NGO representatives also attending)
Also from July '06 -Aug '07	Regional	Four field trips to Senegal, Guinée, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire for advocacy with governments, UN agencies and CBOs on Paris Principles, and <i>Call to Action</i>
	Senegal	Participation in UNICEF/Save/ Christian Children's fund initiative on ex child soldiers in Casamance
	Côte d'Ivoire	Workshop with approx 20 NGOs affiliated with Child Protection Network in Korhogo Workshop (in 2007) for NGO Forum, with 30 staff from national and international NGOs and military liaison officer.

³⁵ Some documentation gives this as happening in 2006

August '07 to March '08		(January 08) With Coalition Programme Manager, training, technical and financial support to NGO Forum (Côte d'Ivoire) on national campaign on OP ratification. Côte d'Ivoire: NGO Forum and coalition meetings with government and presidential officials to advocate for OP ratification (Minister of Foreign Affairs endorses Paris Principles and expresses commitment to the OP) 50 organisations in NGO Forum receive training on international legal framework NGO Forum expansion supported Training on 1612 for local and international organisations Training and financial support to three children's groups (60 children) in Bloléquin for campaigning on OP ratification Financial and technical support for new section of Children's Parliament in Man
	Guinée	Support to two local NGOs in advocacy on prevention and reintegration in Macenta and N'zérékoré Training 15 NGOs in N'zérékoré on legal framework Workshop for police and military on prevention Training for Trainers for three new partners in Conakry, Macenta and N'zérékoré Continued support to research on cross border research.
February '08	Côte d'Ivoire	12 February "Red Hand Day" planned support to children's clubs and parliament for activities across the country. Training for local NGOs in Man, on the Paris Principles, results in the creation of ROPERM as a child protection network. "Sensitisation day" in Man with theatre etc
-- PROJECT YEAR 4 --		
August '08	Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire officially delisted by UN Security Council as a country on whose territory child recruitment takes place. Positive development but also absolves them from reporting under the 1612 mechanism on grave child rights violations)
March '08 to Nov '08	Côte d'Ivoire	Advocacy campaign with NGO Forum (with Save the Children) on OP ratification Regular contact with Chef de Cabinet of Côte d'Ivoire government Three 3-day and two 1-day sessions for ROPERM on legal framework, roles and responsibilities, monitoring and reporting. Resulted in mapping of services in the area. (Participation in Save UK Initiative to set up nationwide child protection monitoring and responding framework in Côte d'Ivoire) Support to Save Sweden initiative in Côte d'Ivoire to set up country-wide "Children's parliament" and provided financial and technical support to children's parliament in Man (developments put on hold by Save in Sept 2008)
	Guinée	(22 March) Sabou Guinée advocacy event with ARCPN Video camera provided to Sabou Guinée for documentary on child recruitment in Forestière (the documentary was not made "due to other priorities and lack of human resources")
29 May '08	Côte d'Ivoire	Bloléquin girls' theatre group performance in Abidjan to coincide with launch of Save the Children report on sexual violence by UN and humanitarian worker. Coalition provided financial support.

June '08 (16 June is International Day of the African Child)	Côte d'Ivoire	<p>"Children's caravan" in Abidjan and Man, Côte d'Ivoire (as part of NGO Forum campaign) and support to Save and local NGOs in concert and 'red hand collection' for Day of the African Child (with 1000 T-shirts). In Abidjan 500 children march to General Assembly, where a delegation makes a presentation including a call for the OP following which the Minister (of Family, Gender and Social Affairs), committed to follow-up on ratification.</p> <p>Briefing led by NGO Forum with 50 participants including 20 government staff to explain OP. Chief of Staff committed to bring to the attention of president.</p> <p>Financial and technical support to local child protection network in Man (ROPERM) for local advocacy on 16th June: 200 children participate in events with community members, UN staff and few local authority representatives. (Not however felt to have reached the intended local authorities)</p>
	Guinée	Sabou Guinée advocacy event with ARCPN.
	Project dev't	Program Manager (Enrique R) leaves Coalition
October '08	Côte d'Ivoire	ROPERM election of new president
November '08	Guinée	Agreed to provide financial support to COLTE, in Guinée for five months.
December '08	Guinée	Coup d'état in Guinée – hampered capacity for child protection and work of coalition and partners
10 Dec '08 (Human Rights Day)	Côte d'Ivoire	Event with ROPERM, in Man on local advocacy to follow-up June events which were felt not to have successfully reached authorities: Caravan with 60 children presenting concerns to Forces Nouvelle, mayor, local government representatives etc.
12 Feb '09	Côte d'Ivoire	<p>"Red Hand day" – international Day to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.</p> <p>NGO forum prepared petition on OP for presentation to Côte d'Ivoire government</p>
Feb-March '09	Côte d'Ivoire	12 March: planned 'Closing Ceremony for NGO Forum OP campaign.
	Guinée	Save the Children meeting with COLTE to develop action plan.
	Project dev't	Dee finishes as project manager. (End of Baring's supported project.)
-- END OF BARING'S SUPPORTED PROJECT --		
1 April '09	Guinée	Coordinator supported for COLTE (until 30 June after which Save the Children takes on support)
April –May '09	Project dev't	Field interviews for evaluation

Appendix 2: Interviewees

Child Soldiers Coalition

- **Victoria Forbes Adam**, Director
- **Lucia Withers**, Acting Director (Nov 2008-March 2009)
- **Dee Wurth**, West Africa Project Manager (May 2007-Feb 2009)³⁶
- **Enrique Restoy**, Programme Manager (Jul 04-Jun 08)

Save the Children

- **Ulla Blomquist**, Senior Advisor, Save the Children Sweden, Dakar
- **Heather Kerr**, Country Director, Save the Children UK, Abidjan
- **Mark Canavera**, Head of Child Protection, Save the Children UK, Abidjan /Man
- **William Choukouma** (Man) and **Gompou** (Odienne), Child Protection, Save the Children UK
- **Michel Seka**, Child Protection, Save the Children UK, Abidjan
- **Michel Eponon**, Child Protection Officer, Save the Children Sweden, Abidjan

International Organisations

- **Dr Bernadette Dramou**, Administrateur Adjoint de Projet Survie, UNICEF, N'zérékoré
- **Innocent Sangara**, Protection Officer, UNHCR, N'zérékoré and **Dore Matho Nianga**, Protection Assistant, UNHCR, N'zérékoré
- **Mme Djonghoi Konate**, Charge de Protection, UNICEF, Man

Local Partners and other NGOs/CBOs

- **Delphine Koffi**, former Executive Secretary, NGO Forum, Abidjan
- **M. Koukoui**, President, NGO Forum, Abidjan
- **Dr Ives Koussan**, *Ide Afrique* and former president of ROPERM, Man
- **Jean Pierre Tiemoko**, (of ODAFEM), *President du comite des activites*, ROPERM Man
- **Denis Doua**, (ODAFEM), President of ROPERM Man
- **Sabine Dan**, *Charge de Communication, Centre d'Excellence des Femmes* (part of IFS, within ROPERM), Man
- **Mme Loua**, (FEDI), second Vice President, ROPERM, Man
- **Mme Koffi**, Director and **Coulibaly Bakary**, Teacher, Pepiniere (Member of ROPERM), Man
- **Bini** (President) and **Marius** (Coordinator), PECl, Abidjan
- **Ibrahim Diallo**, Director, Sabou Guinée, N'zérékoré
- **Abraham Bility**, Director, ARCPN, N'zérékoré
- **Alphonse Touama Gemou**, Director, ADDEF, N'zérékoré
- **Mme Tiessiehi Boni**, Director (and colleagues), ONG Bingnet Pah, Bloléquin
- **Mr Gouanda Florent**, Financier, Siloé, Danane

³⁶ Written notes and observations from Dee served as an important source for her perspective on many of the questions addressed by the evaluation.

Children

- **Three girls** from the Centre Social, Bloléquin
- **Five children** from Pepiniere, Man
- **Three Liberian girls** aged 16 - 18 , ARCPN, N'zérékoré

Educators

- **Abraham and Tatiana**, *Educateurs Sociaux*, Bloléquin Centre Social
- Coordinator and Principal of school in which ARCPN works, N'zérékoré

Authorities / Officials

- **M. Desire Mondon**, *Conseiller a la Presidence*, Abidjan
- **Kekoura Gilavagi**, *Chef de Quartier*, N'zérékoré and **Yakouba Camara**, *Chef de Quartier*, N'zérékoré
- **Bernard Gbongue**, Representative in Man, PNRRC
- **Mr Fulgence Loua**, *Agent Communautaire* and **Tia Ben Salia**, Supervisor, PFA, Man
- **Mr Tan Monsia Mathurin**, *Chef d'Antenne, Foi et Vie*, Man
- **Ibrahim Cisse**, Child Protection Focal Point, *Force Armées des Forces Nouvelles* (FAFN), Man
- **Mr Bamba**, Mayor of Lola

Appendix 3: Documentation

- Briefing note for external evaluators December 2008
- Initial Project Proposal to funder (2005?)
- *Annual Monitoring Report* August 2006
- *West Africa Project Annual Report April 2007 to March 2008* and appended logframe
- *Child Soldiers and DDDR in West Africa* Coalition to Stop the use of Child Soldiers, November 2006
- *Call for Action: Working with Child Soldiers in West Africa* booklet published by the Coalition and Save-Sweden, 2006.
- *Interim Report and Action Plan Second Stage (July 2006 to March 2008)* October 2007
- Extract from previous Programme Manager (Enrique Restoy's) handover notes – 4 July 2008
- (Draft) Project Annual Report April 2008 to March 2009 and appended logframe analysis³⁷
- Internal Evaluation: Response to questions relating to whole project
- *West Africa Project Activities, July 2005 – March 2009*
- Spreadsheet summary of training workshops
- *Campagne pour le protocol facultatif* - report May-June 2008, NGO Forum, 2009.

³⁷ Some of these documents were made available in draft form with comments and questions noted which

itself was of additional value.