



REBUILD

**Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers
in Post-Conflict Contexts**

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BACKGROUND, MISSION & PRINCIPLES

I. BRIEF BACKGROUND

The recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and political violence in multiple regions of the world is a major threat to sustainable peace. The numbers have dramatically increased and persist at alarming levels in regions such as, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, and elsewhere. Both boys and girls face the horrors of conflict and are subjected to roles such as, physical combat (killing or other acts of violence), cooks, porters, messengers, informants and spies, and sexual purposes. Generally, non-state military commanders see children as cheap weapons of war, easily compliant and manipulated. Unfortunately, if children are lucky enough to escape or are forced to disarm, the harm often continues. Children are doubly victimized by being detained for their former association with armed forces or groups, or suffer from mental illness due to the lack of social support in their communities in hopes to reinstate back into a state of normalcy.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes are based on relevant provisions of international law, field experience, and lessons learned by the United Nations Children's Fund and its partners over the past 15 years in its programmes for the prevention of recruitment and the demobilization and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups. However, much work has yet to be done in the area of effective reintegration and long-term social support, on the ground. *The Paris Principles and Guidelines On Children Associated With Armed Forces Or Armed Groups* adopted in 2007, defines Child Reintegration in the following way:

“Child Reintegration” is the process through which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for children to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured. This process aims to ensure that children can access their rights, including formal and non-formal education, family unity, dignified livelihoods and safety from harm.”

On the basis of this definition, Rebuild does not take part in the criminalization of former child soldiers, instead, aims to compliment other areas of consideration such as, restorative justice for children having faced horrendous treatment. In accordance with Article 26 of the Rome Statute, ‘Exclusion of jurisdiction over persons under eighteen’, the Court shall have no jurisdiction over any person who was under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged commission of a crime. Thus, Rebuild will cooperate with domestic and international justice mechanisms when necessary and only with a formal consent from our beneficiary.

This policy proposal is not a pre-packaged set of solutions that attempts to answer all questions pertaining to multifaceted mechanisms in addressing reintegration challenges. We provide methodological tools that may help in the design of context based reintegration policies from the perspective of a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

II. MISSION STATEMENT

Rebuild believes that reintegration is a justice process for former child soldiers and families. As a local NGO, our work is aimed at strengthening formal DDR processes, by focusing on the social reintegration process of former child soldiers into society through the development of alternative programs which contribute to the overall wellbeing of children, and by extension their families and communities, alike. We maintain direct dialogue with our beneficiaries by addressing their needs in the reintegration context, while

also acting as facilitators between victim groups and other relevant actors in the transitional justice setting, where deemed necessary (e.g. civil society, the State, other NGO's). Rebuild believes that social reintegration of former child soldiers is contingent on the consideration and inclusion of the following elements: documentation, security, victim participation, gender/intersectionality, and finally reparations.

III. PRINCIPLE APPROACHES

Reintegration as a “Justice” Process

Rebuild believes that reintegration of former child soldiers back into society is a form of *justice*. Reintegration, as defined above, is the process by which children have the right to transition into society and are empowered to engage in roles and identities as civilians who are accepted into society without stigma and hostility. We believe that the reintegration of former child soldiers as victims of human rights violations, should be considered as a relevant component to effective transitional justice efforts. Reintegration vis-a-vis rehabilitation is a form of guarantee of non-recurrence and prevention of future violence. Rebuild's efforts to rehabilitate will have an impact in (1) the direct rehabilitation and protection of former child soldiers and (2) the education of communities in an effort to create a supportive and protective environment. The Basic Principles and Guidelines on Reparation explicitly state that guarantees of non-repetition “contribute to prevention.” Therefore, reintegration is among the various methods to ensure non-recurrence. The active and collaborative participation of former child soldiers and their families in the reintegration process is to subsequently encourage empowerment and agency in other transitional justice processes. Thus, a vigilant focus on former child soldiers as a vulnerable group and as a future generation should be considered, where prevalent, in transitional justice efforts.

Do No Harm

Rebuild will ensure that all interactions with former child soldiers, their families, and members of the community will uphold the principles of “Do No Harm”. In this respect, Rebuild will employ sensitization in all interactions, by ensuring that all processes such as, interviews and questions are posed in a manner that is not intrusive, threatening, stigmatizing, and/or imposing. They must be provided with the safe space to come forward voluntarily and with appropriate reassurances of their security so that they may effectively participate in various stages of the reintegration strategy.

DOCUMENTATION POLICY

I. PURPOSE & APPROACH

The documentation process of Rebuild seeks to capture and document the experiences, stories, multiplicity of former child soldiers experience, as well as families and communities alike. This will subsequently inform the holistic strategies and approaches to meeting the needs of our reintegration policy. Rebuild's approach to documentation seeks to assist with and set the foundations for reintegration which is essential for non-recurrence and creating peaceful and secure societies where former child soldiers, their families and the community at large feel safe and can, in fact, reintegrate and rehabilitate.

Documentation must also capture all relevant information required to reintegrate former child soldiers. Documentation must ascertain the psychological, physical, and emotional harm and impact on former child soldiers for the purpose of reintegration. Documentation must also capture the places of their abduction as well as the areas where they have engaged as perpetrators. A holistic assessment is required to ascertain the best means of approaching reintegration and will better inform the development of effective strategies. To this end, it is necessary to track critical information about the former child soldiers' experiences of *reintegration*, the successes and failures in the field and, in general, the lessons learned.

II. POLICIES

A. Documentation Methodology

Rebuild will ensure that the matters documented are accurate, with adequate and correct details recorded. Where language barriers are prevalent, Rebuild will ensure that translators are able to facilitate effective communication and clarify questions asked or lines of inquiry. Rebuild will also ensure that it documents information from reliable sources of information and that witness testimonies on incidents are viewed comparatively and holistically in a manner that facilitates a comprehensive and accurate recording of the occurrences being documented.

Rebuild will carry out active field work using all its available resources and personnel which includes statement takers, investigators, humanitarian practitioners, psychologists, lawyers, etc. Field work will include interviews with victims of armed groups, former child soldier, their families, and other members of the community. All interviews will be done with the express consent of those providing testimonies and will be documented accurately. In this respect, Rebuild further notes that interventions with former child soldiers must be appropriately timed at the moment in which armed groups disband prior to their dispersal and becoming lost in transition.

Rebuild will also use official records (e.g. State documents, publications by International Organizations and Civil Societies, etc) and available technology in collecting information for documentation (e.g. online research, satellite surveillance of activities and locations of ANSA).

B. Documentation for the Purposes of Reintegration

Documentation on the reintegration of former child soldiers' will have the two areas of focus: (1) Documentation of Impact; and (2) Documentation of the Reintegration Process. The Documentation efforts and material are safeguarded within the confines of the provisions for confidentiality and security specified in the Security Policy.

a. *Documentation of Impact*

Rebuild will first prioritize the documentation of the experiences and impacts of the abduction of former child soldiers and the harm that they have suffered. In this regard, sources of information for documentation include: (i) testimonies of former child soldiers, their families and members of the community; (ii) reports of child abductions; (iii) reports of crimes committed by armed groups using child soldiers (including public records available, if any); (iv) official publications and documentaries on child abductions, child soldiers, and patterns of abduction and initiation into armed groups; (v) official records on State projects and programs for child care and reintegration of former child soldiers with emphasis those specifically addressing protection measures in their communities, families and social environment; (vi) official psychosocial reports (therapy sessions and rehabilitation mechanisms) of former child soldiers.

b. Documentation of the Reintegration Process

Rebuild will further document the progress and challenges faced when reintegrating former child soldiers back into society. Rebuild will document all developments in the reintegration process from its conception which includes its progress, challenges, successes, and failures. The documentation will cover all aspects of the reintegration process including the former child soldiers' education progression, psychological state, concerns raised, barriers faced, interests and ambitions, social reintegration, level of satisfaction, and overall contentment or happiness, etc. A Rebuild case worker will be assigned to each former child soldier to monitor their reintegration process in the first three years. This case worker will be responsible for ensuring that the entire reintegration process is accurately documented.

C. Annual Report

Rebuild will prepare an Annual Report of work which will document the years' work including activities, major achievements (milestones), challenges, setbacks, collaborations, success stories, statistics, etc. The Annual Report will disclose information within the safeguards of confidentiality and security specified in the Security Policy.

D. Preservation of Data: Physical and Electronic Record Keeping

All information collected and documented will be kept on file in physical and electronic forms. The electronic copy will be stored in an electronic database whereas the physical copy will be filed accordingly. Rebuild will have a codified numeric file allocation system that will demarcate all information documented according to its specific category into a comprehensive physical filing system. An electronic database will also be set up where all documents will be scanned and retained in electronic files as a backup to the original physical copies. The electronic database will replicate the same codified numeric file allocation system that is used to organize the physical files. In this manner, the reference number for the physical files will match that of its corresponding electronic copy. Rebuild will further invest in a Cloud backup system for its electronic files as a further precaution against loss of data.

E. Partnerships with Other Relevant Bodies

Rebuild will endeavor to cooperate with Commissions of Inquiry, Civil Society, and other international and national bodies. We will work on a collaborative basis with these bodies, for the purpose of disclosing relevant information about our work and findings regarding former child soldiers, while adhering to our confidentiality principles. Rebuild posits that without the informed consent of victim groups and their families, names and specific locations shall not be disclosed to other bodies and groups.

SECURITY & PROTECTION POLICY

I. PURPOSE & APPROACH

This policy aims to ensure the protection and security of data protection, confidentiality and privacy of Rebuild members and those whom we engage in the conduct of our work which includes informants, victims of armed groups, former child soldiers and their relatives (**'participants'**). In addition, the security policy is designed to address specific issues related to justice mechanisms (with domestic and international mechanisms) as well as our role and position in relation with Transitional Justice mechanisms.

II. POLICIES

A. Confidentiality

Rebuild staff must ensure that they keep the identities of participants confidential. Specific details of the contents of discussions and information acquired during fieldwork must be kept confidential if disclosure would pose a real risk of revealing the identity of the participant or otherwise, cause unwarranted danger to the participant or other persons. All participants must be informed of the importance of maintaining confidentiality for their own protection as well as to protect Rebuild in the conduct of its activities.

B. Security and Protection Training

Rebuild members will receive mandatory training on security and protection mechanisms and strategies that may be employed in the field to minimize security risks. If possible or where the circumstances so require, participants will be trained in identifying compromising situations which could potentially lead to security risks, precautionary measures to mitigate security risks and the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

C. Physical Security

Rebuild will collaborate with DDR organizations to provide intelligence information on locations of rebel groups and children in order to effectively approach former child soldiers as they are released from the military camps, prior to them dispersing and becoming lost in transition. In the case of former child soldiers that are orphaned, homeless or cannot return to their family, Rebuild will provide temporary housing. In this regard, Rebuild will communicate with DDR organizations to locate and assign case managers and promote outreach initiatives for the provision of foster homes and basic social services (health, education, psychological support and therapy) for the former child soldiers.

Rebuild will maintain periodical communication with local authorities (school administration, police, local leaders, religious leaders) to monitor the safety of former child soldiers and their families. This process will be done to ensure the wellbeing of our beneficiaries, in their daily life after reconnecting with their social environment. In addition, this process contributes to re-occurrence process by eliminating potential return to the conflict zone.

Finally, meetings will only be resorted to if completely necessary and must conform to the strictest standards of privacy and confidentiality. Meeting venues must be at secure locations and must be rotated to ensure that no two consecutive meetings with the same participant takes place at the same venue. The venue of the meeting must be inconspicuous so as not to draw unwarranted attention or suspicion. The participant will be notified of the meeting through secure means to guarantee their safety i.e. use of encrypted messages and coded language.

D. Engagement with Transitional Justice Processes

As a local NGO, Rebuild acknowledges its limitations with respect to Transitional Justice mechanisms due to the institutionalization of these processes. However, Rebuild remains committed to contributing to these processes, within our scope and capacity. This role will be defined when Transitional Justice mechanisms are put in place. Rebuild remains open to cooperation with civil society sector, international organizations, as well as public institutions, in joining forces to contribute to long-lasting peace. Rebuild will support such processes while bearing in mind the importance of informing and receiving consent of former child soldiers and their families.

VICTIM PARTICIPATION POLICY

I. PURPOSE & APPROACH

Rebuild takes a *Consultative* and *Inclusive* approach towards the reintegration of former child soldiers within their families and communities. Former child soldiers, their families, and communities are key actors and should maintain continuous and active participation in the process of reintegration. Rebuild considers that a *Consultative* and *Inclusive* reintegration process contributes to enabling lasting peace between former child soldiers, families, and communities through re-establishing civic trust.

Victim participation acquires a special dimension, not only for children who have been exploited in war, but also for the receiving families and communities. Child soldiers are complex victims as they are also perceived as perpetrators for their role in armed groups. **Rebuild** is, therefore, mindful that their reintegration and rehabilitation may face tensions due to community perception and social stigma. **Rebuild** is aware of these sensitivities as well as the needs of former child soldiers and seeks to implement a process that establishes civic trust.

If tensions and hostilities between former child soldiers and the community are ignored, it could adversely impact the reintegration process and the preventive function of transitional justice. **Rebuild** considers participation as a fundamental element to a successful reintegration processes of former child soldiers which contributes to guaranteeing non-recurrence of future violations. If the reintegration processes does not engage the communities in a consultative and inclusive manner, former child soldiers could be exposed or left vulnerable to further recruitment, dangerous living conditions, mental health issues, alienation, isolation, etc; resulting in new breaches of their rights and potential risks of violence.

This policy takes a broad view of victims to include former child soldiers, their families, and their communities. This policy aims to promote, enable, encourage, and facilitate victim participation at all stages of the reintegration process. Rebuild will advocate for empowering victim groups to be essential decision-makers in the design, implementation, and subsequent monitoring of the reintegration projects and activities.

II. POLICIES

A. Victim Participation in Needs Assessment and Strategy Design

a. *Giving a Voice to Victims: Statement Taking*

As a *first stage* to designing and implementing effective reintegration strategies, Rebuild will create a space for understanding the diverse experiences and harms suffered by victims through the collection of their statements. **Rebuild** will conduct this process of statement taking in various informal settings, either in communal or individual gatherings occurring in public spaces in towns and cities, with community members, former child soldiers, and their families. These initial spaces will seek to acquire testimonies, narratives, and views of the priorities that victims pursue to be redressed within the reintegration strategy taking into account their characteristics and diverse experiences in the conflict. In order to collect these initial narratives, information and views, Rebuild will remain vigilant and attentive for the optimal opportunity to implement this intervention process, which may take place when armed groups have been officially disbanded, or in the process of disarmament.

b. *Individual Consultations with Former Child Soldiers*

The Individual Consultation process will operate as the *second stage* to implement in the reintegration strategy. Rebuild will conduct individual consultations with former child soldiers where the services offered will be presented. The details of the reintegration strategy will be developed based on the needs of the former child soldier and family members:

- (i) Psychosocial and Recreational Support Programmes
- (ii) Housing and Accommodation

Rebuild will listen to the queries and/or concerns of former child soldier and families, and aim to provide reassurance and guidance. It would also present an opportunity for the former child soldier to voice any proposals to alter or improve the strategy to meet specific preferences or skill sets, that is to say that if child soldiers prefer or feel best suited for farming, they could request capacity building or education in farming practices, rather than fishing or mathematics.

B. Former Child Soldier Victim Support Network

Rebuild will establish a network that supports the reintegration of former child soldiers in a community based setting. Within the *Victim Support Network*, local leaders, such as, cultural and religious leaders, psychologists and therapists, and other civil society organizations will be encouraged to facilitate community based sessions on educating and promoting acceptance, respect, inclusivity, de-stigmatization of trauma and victims who have suffered from sexual violence or rape. Such a network can also act as an essential stepping stone for creating community solidarity in establishing and consolidating broader initiatives such as the linking with future Transitional Justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions, trials, administrative reparation programs, etc. Through the establishment of the *Victim Support Network*, Rebuild aims to facilitate greater community ownership and participation in the reintegration process.

C. Victim Participation as a Continuous Process

Victim participation is not a “one-off event” but an ongoing processes of communication and review with former child soldiers, their families and communities. Rebuild will develop a strategy for reintegration based on all the information accumulated through consultations with the groups of victims. Rebuild will further invite the communities, the former child soldiers, and their families to review the reintegration strategy and provide their further views on how it may be further improved or refined. During the implementation of the reintegration strategy, Rebuild will further encourage and support consultations and interviews with former child soldiers, relatives, teachers, community and religious leaders in order to listen to their views, perspectives and claims about the reintegration projects and activities. Rebuild will further channel this feedback through focus groups to review and develop strategic improvements throughout the duration of reintegration process.

INTERSECTIONALITY POLICY

I. PURPOSE & APPROACH

Rebuild believes in taking an intersectional approach to addressing the complex and multifaceted experiences that child soldiers are commonly subject to. An intersectional analysis acknowledges the various identities and social categories in difficult contexts (eg. gender, class, race, social position). Rebuild draws attention to the underrepresented dimensions commonly omitted in dominant child soldier narratives, such as, not all child soldiers are boys, both boys and girls experience sexual violence and/or rape, and finally, they should not be defined as perpetrators. Considering these intersectional dimensions allows for appropriate strategizing for effective rehabilitation. Our role is to act as facilitators in creating safe spaces to educate and advocate for acceptance back into society without the burden of stigmas.

In various social and cultural spaces, communities are not respectful in acknowledging or openly discussing sexual violence and/rape of former child soldiers, which can further contribute to feelings of humiliation, embarrassment, guilt, isolation, and lost sense of belonging. This, poses risks for future recruitment or even voluntary involvement in armed groups because of a loss of identity, community exclusion, lack of education, and poor economic opportunities. However, Rebuild will not coerce victims to come forward, but rather, aim to create safe and inclusive spaces to encourage voluntary involvement in the truth-telling process. It is crucial to establish trust and mutual respect through creating a safe space for relationship building on a voluntary basis.

This Policy seeks to provide guidelines and directions in giving clarity to Rebuild's role, expected code of conduct and course of action with respect to intersectionality, should be understood and related in conjunction with our policies on documentation, security and victim participation. It provides special and additional measures to those mentioned in the other policies which are specific to circumstances in which issues on gender and its intersectionality must be addressed during the reintegration process.

II. POLICIES

A. Documentation of Intersectional Experiences

Rebuild approaches victims with the guiding principles of *Intersectionality, Care, and Prevention* ('ICP'), especially those having experienced sexual violence and rape in order to avoid retraumatization and victimization. Statement takers will be trained on how to approach interviews with respect and from a gendered lens (e.g. ensuring the interview is being conducted in a safe space for the victim and questions are not invasive or assuming).

Training for Statement Takers: Rebuild staff will train the practitioners (local researchers, investigators, civil society, volunteers). Rebuild believes in the security, privacy, and confidentiality of gathering these stories to ensure that victims and their families feel safe in a non-judgmental and invasive environment. Victim participation is key and Rebuild must endeavor to create the most receptive environment in its communications with former child soldiers and their families who are voluntarily revealing stories of gender-based violence or rape, in order to avoid re-traumatization. Rebuild believes in the following steps to ensure safe statement taking processes.

- 1) **Explain how the interview fits into the larger story and object.** Fill the survivor in on their role in their story.
- 2) **Avoid generalizing.** Some survivors may be hesitant to discuss certain aspects of their experience, while others may be more willing to share. Let the survivor share their story in

their own words. While paraphrasing may be a helpful technique to understand the interviewee, it runs the risk of generalizing their experience.

- 3) **No assumptions.** Recognize that every survivor has had a different experience, and may be at different points in their healing process.
- 4) **“Victim” or “Survivor”?** Ask your interviewee if they have a preference. For some, “victim” may be applicable to recent assault, while “survivor” may be more appropriate after a period of healing.
- 5) **Be mindful and respect boundaries.** Ask if there is anything the survivor would prefer not to discuss. Let the survivor know that it’s OK if they don’t want to answer every question you ask.

Identify and Assess Testimonies: Identify former child soldiers that are victims of gender-based violence or sexual violence. In order to address their needs, they must first be identified with proper assessments done to ascertain the specific treatment or assistance that they would require for effective reintegration.

B. Safety and Security: Gender and Intersectionality

Security concerns and needs are especially important if social and cultural norms diverge on issues of gender based violence, LGBTQI rights, or the need for a conducive space for progressive development. In such circumstances, the risk of opposition and hostilities is high which could result in re-victimization of victims, if they do eventuate. Therefore, in order to avoid placing victims of sexual violence at risk when they go back to their homes or community alike, initial interviews and psychosocial support mechanisms will be done in spaces that the victim and/or family members feel most comfortable and do not need to disclose what they are doing. In many societies, psychosocial therapy is looked down upon. However, Rebuild will also encourage local and traditional forms of healing and therapy.

Rebuild does believe and will offer psychosocial support for former child soldiers, specifically for gender-based violence and/or rape. Those identified as such victims, must be given additional psychosocial support required to help them overcome associated trauma. For such cases, individualized consultations and links to social services will include:

- 1) *Psychotherapy:* the treatment of mental and emotional disorders through the use of psychological techniques, aiming for behavioral, social, and personal growth and healing.
- 2) *Individual Therapy:* One-to-one between therapist and victim to create positive change.
- 3) *Creative Therapy:* Use of expressive and creative techniques.

C. Former Child Soldier Victim Support Network with a Intersectional Lens

As mentioned in the Victim Participation Policy, Rebuild will establish a ***Former Child Soldier Support Network***. Regarding gender and its intersectionality, the Network will generate additional and specialized support circles in public spaces for former child soldiers who have have experienced sexual violence or rape. This network will focus solely on the education stigma, societal acceptance, sexual violence for the purpose of promoting acceptance and de-stigmatization. The network will also encourage women in communities, and girl former child soldiers to consolidate.

Rebuild will facilitate the establishment of this platform under the network that, *inter alia*, seeks to:

- 1) Assist female former child soldiers in overcoming stigma and social rejection, which often arises due to the social and cultural stigmatization of “bush wives”, rape and sexual violence;
- 2) Destigmatize male former child soldiers who are victims of rape or sexual violence;

- 3) Promote victim participation on issues of gender and its intersectionality in the long-term transitional justice process.

Rebuild will include therapists and psychologists, as key facilitators of the process. The training will seek to build their capacity to further educate those within the Network as well as the community at large. By training them as trainers, it is hoped that a rippling effect will arise whereby communities take ownership of the de-stigmatization process.

D. Collaboration with Local Communities, Civil Society and International Bodies

Rebuild will collaborate with local communities, civil societies and international bodies that share common objectives of breaking gender barriers and addressing intersectionality. In this regard, Rebuild will channel the collaboration to focus on the issues most relevant to the reintegration of former child soldiers, e.g. de-stigmatization, psychosocial support, community advocacy and network building, reduce security risk, etc.

In order to desensitize this topic and further facilitate community ownership in the de-stigmatization process, Rebuild will also seek to directly link the civil societies and international bodies to the local communities. The aim is to establish a platform for collaboration and engagement with key stakeholder in various communities including local leaders, cultural leaders, religious leaders, families of former child soldiers and other active community members.

REPARATIONS POLICY

I. PURPOSE & APPROACH

Rebuild considers the reintegration of former child soldiers as a form of reparation. According to the 2005 UN Basic Principles on Reparations and international law jurisprudence [e.g. Inter-American Court of Human Rights], reparations measures include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-recurrence. Former child soldiers are complex victims as they are also viewed as offenders. In that sense, the social services provided by Rebuild within the framework of reintegration are tailored to support former child soldiers in their return to civilian life, their families and communities, as well as to redress the harm suffered through their effective rehabilitation.

Rebuild recognises that social rejection by families and communities is a major challenge in the reintegration of former child soldiers and it is, therefore, critical to involve families and communities in these reintegration/reparation processes. By involving families and communities, there is a higher propensity for their acceptance of and cooperation with the reintegration/reparation process, while subsequently encouraging comprehensive participation (see Victim Participation Policy). In that sense, the policy approaches advanced under this Policy seeks to achieve a positive *collective* impact through *individual* reparations to former child soldiers.

Reparations must be considered in terms of what would best restore the former child soldiers to their rightful places in society had they not suffered the violations ie. recruitment into armed groups, abduction, indoctrination, torture, sexual violence, etc. To an extent, reparations is approached with the full knowledge that complete restitution will never be possible as their childhood can never be returned, nor the violations undone. The psychological damage and social impact to former child soldiers, leaves deep scars which requires a holistic approach in devising appropriate context specific reparation programmes. This Policy, therefore, seeks to approach reparations in a manner that deals with the past violations that former child soldiers have suffered while looking forward through a psychosocial lens to ascertain strategies that would facilitate their reintegration into society, restoring their status as members of the society and further guaranteeing non-recurrence.

II. POLICIES

A. Housing Programme

Where former child soldiers are unable to return to their families, Rebuild will facilitate the identification of foster families, orphanages, or other alternative housing arrangements.

In this regard, Rebuild will coordinate with private institutions, civil society as well as the State to identify suitable avenues and environments for their reintegration. Of particular relevance in the private sphere is identifying homes, charitable organisations, and also religious based orphanages. In terms of State initiatives and mechanisms, Rebuild will further coordinate with State owned orphanages, social welfare services and child services as well as identify avenues that may be available under State run Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration programmes.

Rebuild will further have temporary housing arrangements made available in its own capacity which will be used to provide accommodation while ascertaining and exploring permanent arrangements that would best facilitate reintegration. Given the lack of functioning state structures, this initiatives will require civil society support and specifically, donor funding.

B. Psychosocial and Recreational Support Programmes: A Holistic Approach

Rehabilitation is an essential tool for the reintegration of former child soldiers into society. Political violence, armed conflict, and war have adverse impacts on the mental health of child soldiers and their families resulting in various forms of mental, emotional, or behavioral distress, such as, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder ('PTSD'). Such conditions create a risk for these at-risk children to adequately function in all aspects of societal involvement (formal or informal). As such, Rebuild will collaborate with local social workers, clinical psychologists, therapists, educators, and community leaders to facilitate the rehabilitation process of the Psychosocial Support Programme and Recreational Therapy Programme, for a holistic social reintegration process for at-risk children having experienced extraordinary circumstances as child soldiers. Rebuild will also be open to encouraging local and traditional healing techniques, contingent on if that is contextually applicable.

Considering Rebuild's intersectional approach and "do no harm" to the rehabilitation agenda, our recreational therapist will assess and outline a plan of treatment for each child, before such implementation is to take place, as to ensure that (1) The plan meets the child's interests and goals, as well as their family; and (2) If a child will require enhanced attention or support throughout this process.

Psychosocial Support Programme

Rebuild believes in the principles of *Intersectionality, Care, and Prevention* ('ICP') in establishing the Psychosocial Support Programme for former child soldiers and their families. This program will aim to do the following:

- 1) *Individual Assessment and Diagnosis*: Identify the experiences, specific needs and concerns of both the former child soldiers and their families. Measures must be developed through a victim centered and participatory approach which gives former child soldiers and their families ownership in the construction of psychosocial support programme. There is also a need to provide particular support for victims of sexual violence and rape, recognising the intersectionality of stigmatisation. Various services include:
 - a. *Psychotherapy*: the treatment of mental and emotional disorders through the use of psychological techniques, aiming for behavioral, social, and personal growth and healing.
 - b. *Individual Therapy*: One-to-one between therapist and victim to create positive change.
 - c. *Creative Therapy*: Use of expressive and creative techniques.
- 2) *Risk Assessment*: Define potential threats to mental health and psychosocial wellbeing back home, in the community, and/or at school and as such, ensure the necessary protective measures are implemented. Rebuild will also address cultural sensitivity by ensuring that these assessments are conducted by a male or female, depending on the desires of the families.
- 3) *Community Healing Networks*: Develop and facilitate social support circles where former child soldiers and their families can partake in peer-to-peer activities to discussing stigma, taboo, shame, identity, and belonging. Encourage the involvement of community leaders, traditional healers, cultural, religious, and spiritual leaders to design and facilitate various forms of healing processes. Such community based activities will act as mechanisms to ensure a level of social solidarity and unity which could ensure non-recurrence.

Recreational Therapy: Restoring Quality of Life

Rebuild believes in the impact of Recreational Therapy which utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions as a means to recovery and well-being. The purpose of this process is to improve the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional functioning of former child soldiers as a holistic rehabilitation process by

involving former child soldiers in social activities as a form of rebuilding skills that will need to be reinstated. Children under the age of 18, having suffered abnormal circumstances, should be given the space to interact, play, respect, cooperate with their peers and community, alike. and reinforce social normalcy into these children's lives. This will be done in the following ways:

- Small group interactions and games: sports, arts and crafts; cultural events (singing, theatre, dance)
- Play Skills: coaching children and youth to cooperate and respect one another.
- Vocational Skills: Encourage community based learning of skills such as agriculture and fishing, and other context relevant trades.

C. Long-Term Approach

Rights Based Advocacy

In the long-term, Rebuild is committed to working with the State to promote reintegration of former child soldiers. In this regard, Rebuild will advocate and lobby for the interests of former child soldiers to State institutions in seeking appropriate reparations from the State which would facilitate their reintegration, e.g. free primary and secondary education, scholarships to pursue advanced tertiary education, provision of employment opportunities, self-help programmes, social services (psychiatry and counselling), medical health services, etc.

Rebuild will further advocate and lobby for the State to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child ('**CRC**') and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict ('**Optional Protocol**') in recognition of the violation of the former child soldiers' rights and as a proactive step towards guaranteeing non-recurrence. In this regard, Rebuild will further advocate and lobby for the provisions of the CRC and the Optional Protocol to be implemented through domestic legislation to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded and that the State has a duty to ensure that these rights are protected, respected and fulfilled.

Employment Advocacy

Employment plays a vital role in promoting psychosocial well-being: the economic autonomy which it provides is central to defining social status and individual psychological contentment or satisfaction. Employment goes hand-in-hand with the reintegration process and provides a basis for establishing civic trust between citizens through re-establishing societal norms with respect to employment, hard work, equal opportunity and achieving success. Employment further provides former child soldiers with a source of income and purpose as a productive member of society. Employment supports the former child soldiers' inclusive status as a member of the workforce and economy which redefines their identity in a constructive manner that provides provides a sense of security and belonging to the society, essentially facilitating their transition away from their identification as ex-combatants.

By positively influencing the re-establishment of civic trust and the former child soldier's identity within society, employment provides a further guarantee of non-recurrence as it renders a sort of permanence to their reintegration whereby they would be less likely to pick up arms or return to conflict in future. Rebuild in cooperation with international organizations will initiate employment opportunities. In the private economic context, Rebuild will sign MoUs with business enterprises and international organisations that are supportive of the reintegration process to facilitate programmes that will train and facilitate employment for former child soldiers. Rebuild will advocate and lobby the State to provide legislative protections against discriminatory employment practices that marginalise and disadvantage former child soldiers.. This will the participation of former child soldiers in the development and implementation of sound policies for their inclusiveness in the workforce, such as a context-specific "yellow ribbon" programme promoting all aspects of reintegration of former child soldiers including being afforded an equal employment opportunity.