



**“Child witches”, child soldiers,  
child poverty and violence:**

**Street children in crisis in the  
Democratic Republic of Congo.**

**Report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on  
Street Children on its mission to the Democratic  
Republic of Congo and recommendations for  
addressing the escalating street child crisis.**

**Co-sponsored by War Child and the Jubilee  
Campaign.**

**November 2006**

For Nadesh and Jean Baptiste.  
Your hope and well being is a debt that is owed to you.

And for Kondikor and Mabengo Joel who were murdered.  
Your lives have not been forgotten.  
We will not stop fighting.

The prosecution of war on children is *the vilest act to have ever disfigured the human conscience.*

Four million people have died in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a consequence of the most lethal conflict since the Second World War. Most of the dead are women and children. And this war continues to devastate the lives of children more than anyone else.

War does not just kill children. It does not just destroy the infrastructure that provides them with food, medicine, education and shelter. It destroys the very social fabric that would otherwise provide them with protection, care and hope. Because of this, many children living with the consequences of war end up being conscripted into armed groups, accused of being witches or forced to undertake dangerous and exploitative work just to survive.

Invariably they are pushed into a life on the streets. There are more than 250,000 homeless children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Over 25,000 children live and work on the streets of Kinshasa alone. These children are regularly beaten and sometimes murdered. They are frequently subjected to sexual abuse and, due to a lack of health care, die from illnesses that are both preventable and curable. They have no access to education.

The UK Government is the second largest bilateral donor to the Democratic Republic of Congo. It has, therefore, committed the support of the British public to the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo in a substantial way. This is a long term commitment that will help build a viable nation and establish the security and opportunities for the people to lift themselves out of poverty, while enabling them to gift a future with hope to their children.

In recognition of the right of children to be consulted on issues that affect their lives the All Party Parliamentary Group on Street Children, with the British charity War Child, and co-sponsored by the Jubilee Campaign, undertook a mission to Kinshasa in September 2006. This mission engaged street children directly and established an informed basis upon which the group will provide support to the efforts of the UK Government and international community in responding to this acute crisis.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Dates of the mission</b>  | 8 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> September, 2006   |
| <b>Members of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Street Children mission</b> | Edward Leigh MP<br>Co-Chair of the APPG on Street Children<br>Chair of the Public Accounts Committee |
|  | Russell Brown MP<br>Co-Chair of the APPG on Street Children  |
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| <b>Release date of this report</b>   | 6 <sup>th</sup> December, 2006   |
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### **A note on terminology**

In using the term street children we are referring to children who do not enjoy consistent, satisfactory levels of protection from a responsible adult, and who are denied access to other fundamental rights such as education and health care. These children might or might not still have a family, but they all spend much of their time on the streets working and often sleeping. Their primary friendship and support networks are located on the streets.

We have, where possible, avoided using the term *child soldier*. There are many children, especially girls, who have been forcibly conscripted into armed groups. They have been exploited as sex slaves, porters and spies, and as such might not have actually been combatants or child soldiers. The term *child soldier*, therefore, can actually exclude these children from consideration.

Throughout the report we seek to be more inclusive by referring to the collective group of children that have been conscripted as *children formerly associated with fighting forces* (CFAFFs), many of whom end up living and working on the streets. This terminology is widely applied by those working on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo.



**Street children in Kinshasa.**

**Some of these boys are children formerly associated with fighting forces. Abducted by various militia groups during recent conflicts and forced to march thousands of miles to Kinshasa they have been separated from their families for up to eight or nine years. With the recent integration of the various militia groups into a national army, these children find themselves with no home or means of support, except for the living they make for themselves on the streets.**

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## 1 Executive summary

In June 2005 the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Street Children received a report from the British charity War Child. The report, entitled *Your War Is Not With Me*, presented findings from War Child's work that illustrated the on-going effects of conflict in the lives of children long after conflict had ended. In particular, it described how the consequences of war unraveled the social fabric that children depend upon for protection, care and support, and how this plays a significant part in their being driven to work and live on the streets.

The report was unique because it was based on research undertaken by street children themselves, and on a powerful analysis developed by school children here in the UK. On this basis, the APPG invited War Child to make a presentation on the street child crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Students from Archbishop Tenison School (Oval) were co-presenters. The students urged members of the APPG to undertake a fact-finding mission to DRC and use this as a basis to develop recommendations that would support the British Government in its efforts to help the DRC address the escalating street child crisis. It was agreed that two of the APPG's co-chairs, Edward Leigh MP and Russell Brown MP, would undertake this mission in 2006.

The APPG found that unemployment and lack of income generating opportunities have stretched the capacities of households to function as viable economic units. Divorce is increasingly common. Many children find themselves in the care of their extended family. But the extended family system is increasingly strained and unable to bare this burden and so many children end up working on the streets. Those children with step-parents are often marginalised in order to create the social and economic space to ensure support for step-brothers and sisters. Increasingly, HIV/AIDS will result in the death of both parents, leaving children with the extended family, which is rarely able to care for them.

A lack of access to education and confined social and political space for women limits their capacity to generate income and protect their children. Within this frame, fetish pastors have established thousands of private churches throughout the major cities. These fetish pastors regularly accuse children, whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS, of witchcraft. Fees will be paid for an exorcism that will often see the child tortured (beatings, mutilation and starvation) by the fetish pastor. In part, this is enabled by a widespread and deep-seated belief in witchcraft, which makes carers vulnerable to exploitation by fetish pastors. The accusation of sorcery and witchcraft is the single largest factor resulting in children being pushed out of their families onto the streets.

Police and Presidential Guards regularly attack and extort money from street children, beating them frequently and even killing them. Local Governors often order the round-up and arrest of street children, which increases the level of violence directed toward them. Street children survive through begging, portering, collecting leaves, prostitution, selling marijuana and alcohol, and stealing, which brings them back into conflict with the law.

Some progress is being made by the government of the DRC in developing legislation and judicial codes as a platform for juvenile justice and a basis for dealing with fetish pastors and abuses against children. But this progress is

limited to the commitment of individual civil servants who are rarely paid. This progress is also primarily confined to paper in a country where justice is rarely applied, and more often corrupted. Non-governmental organisations, including international charities such as War Child, are supporting locally run centres in their provision of family tracing, mediation and reintegration of street children. They are also providing income generating support for street youths. But there is no coherent planning architecture that brings these efforts together in a focused and co-ordinated way to maximise the limited resources available for addressing this crisis.

The recommendations put forward in this report are based on the APPG's position that the UK Government has significant influence and responsibility because of the scale of commitment it is making to the people of the DRC on behalf of the British public. Therefore, the APPG's recommendations seek to use this influence in a "no-nonsense" and practical way by directly responding to issues of impunity, corruption, and exploitation on the one hand, while strengthening the means of preventing abandonment in a coherent and focused way on the other. In summary, the APPG strongly recommends that the UK Government seeks to influence and provide support for:

- The establishment of an anti-corruption and impunity commission to prevent and address the scale of human rights abuses against marginalised children, not least through the application of targeted sanctions, while reinforcing efforts to promote good governance
- Education sector reform and development in a way that ensures access by marginalised children in particular, and promotes livelihood development through the support of vulnerable women
- The development and implementation of a strategy that will address the phenomenon of accusing children of witchcraft
- The development of the planning architecture to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in a way that ensures greater focus and coherent co-ordination in response to the crisis among all the key actors



**Marc, one of the street children interviewed by the APPG, shows a stab wound he received from a policeman while running away to escape demands for money.**



## 2 Map of the DRC



## 3 Framing the street child crisis – an overview of the situation in DRC

DRC has had a turbulent recent history. Propped up by western interests, Mobutu led the country through 32 years of state neglect, intensifying and debilitating corruption, and entrenched poverty. In 1996, with the support of Rwanda and Uganda, Laurent Kabila led a rebellion that drew into it thousands of child soldiers. Mobutu was ousted but Kabila soon became antagonistic toward the continued presence of Rwandan and Ugandan troops. In 1998, drawing on support from neighbouring states, Kabila led an attack against the occupying forces, provoking a second war that involved six other countries.

Military and business elites from these various countries took the opportunity to exploit DRC's vast mineral wealth by supporting local militia groups in order to destabilise and indirectly control areas rich in natural resources. This has caused further division and conflict along ethnic, political, regional and economic fractures. The destruction of the private infrastructures that enabled at least limited access to health and education, and which supported food security and livelihoods, were destroyed. Massive displacement of people occurred in the face of the gravest human rights abuses, not least the systematic use of murder, rape, torture and extortion.

Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and his son, Joseph, came to power. Joseph Kabila has led the country toward agreement of a peace accord, which was eventually signed in 2003. However, the influence of Rwandan and Ugandan interests through their various local proxies has seen the

continuation of conflict throughout the eastern corridor to the present, and the illicit exploitation of DRC's significant mineral wealth.

The UN Mission to Congo (MONUC) was deployed in DRC in 2003 and now constitutes the largest peacekeeping force in the world. A transitional government was also established in 2003, with Joseph Kabila as President and four Vice Presidents variously drawn from the main rebel groups, civil society and Kabila's own party. However, fractures developed very quickly, and a lack of trust and confidence undermined the possibility of genuine political leadership in the transition toward elections and the beginnings of a democratic state. Corruption has flourished again, seeing the most vulnerable, especially children, further marginalised.

Living without shelter, access to health care and food, current estimates indicate that an additional four million people have died - over and above what would normally be expected in DRC - since conflict began in 1996. This colossal increase in mortality - now at 1,200 people per day according to a Lancet report in January - is a consequence of the affects of war (The Lancet, Volume 367, Issue 9504 , 7 January 2006-13 January 2006, Pages 44-51). DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world: 167<sup>th</sup> out 177. On the back of some thirty years of state corruption under Mobutu the people of DRC had already been led into acute poverty. The terrifying nature of conflict in DRC has massively aggravated this poverty. Increasingly, the family is becoming less viable as a social or economic unit. As the social fabric of DRC, especially in the cities, continues to unravel the effects are most acutely felt by children.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has approximately the same population as the UK, about 60 million people. Throughout its major cities, estimates indicate that the national street child population could be more than 60,000. That's 0.001% of the entire population, and does not include the tens of thousands of children made homeless by displacement because of continuing conflict in the east of the country. Indeed, some estimates (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cg.html>) indicate that there are some 2.33 million internally displaced people of which half or more are children.

More than 50% of the DRC's population are children, in fact, 47% of the entire population are under fourteen. With the DRC almost at the bottom of the human development index, one of the poorest countries in the world, we must unfortunately assume that millions of children in DRC are vulnerable to living and working on the streets. The crisis is so entrenched that some children were born on the streets. Indeed, we now have second generation street children in cities like Kinshasa. During the APPG's visit to DRC we often saw young women and girls with nursing infants on the streets.

| Human development indicators   | DRC                       | UK                   |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Land area (km <sup>2</sup> )   | 2,344,858                 | 244,820 <sup>1</sup> |
| GDP per capita (USD)   | 705                       | 30,253               |
| Population   | 57,549,000                | 59,668,000           |
| % of population between 0 and 14   | 51                        | 17.5                 |
| Life expectancy at birth (age in years)  | 43.5                      | 78.5                 |
| Infant mortality (deaths per thousand births)  | 90 <sup>2</sup>           | 5                    |
| Child mortality (deaths of under five's per thousand children)   | 205                       | 6                    |
| <b>Source: <a href="http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/">http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/</a></b>   |                           |                      |
| Total internally displaced population  | 2.33 million <sup>3</sup> | 0                    |
| Estimated street child populations   |                           |                      |
| • Kinshasa   | 25,000                    |                      |
| • Mbuji Mayi   | 5000 <sup>4</sup>         |                      |
| • Goma and Bukavu (Kivus)  | 10,000 <sup>5</sup>       |                      |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>40,000</b>             |                      |
| <b>NB:</b> street child populations for Lubumbashi, Kisangani, and Kolwezi are not available, but are believed to be comparable with those of Mbuji Mayai and Kinshasa giving a national estimate of 60,000+ |                           |                      |

This truly is a crisis of staggering proportions.

The international community has provided substantial support to the transitional peace process and the possibility of democracy. Presidential elections were held in July 2006 with no clear winner. Subsequent to the announcement of the election results at the end of August violence broke out between soldiers in the national army loyal to Kabila and the militia of the main opposition contender, Jean Pierre Bemba. More than fifteen people were killed on the streets of Kinshasa.

During the campaigning period several candidates paid street children to swell the ranks of their own rallies as well as mobilise political dissent. The Governor of Kinshasa ordered the round up of more than seven hundred street working people, which included more than two hundred street children, who were held in detention without charge, and without food.

According to Human Rights Watch, in September 2004, street children paid to march in political demonstrations were attacked in the city of Mbuji Mayi. At least twenty were killed by angry civilians (Human Rights Watch. What Future? Street Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. April 2006). The Presidential run offs were held in October 2006. DRC remains tense with a lack of political leadership and coherent policy, especially in the arena of social development. This is a liability to the well being of marginalised people, not least street children.

<sup>1</sup> DRC is almost ten times the area of the UK with an almost identical population size.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cg.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cg.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/drc0406/5.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/OCHA-64BSJM?OpenDocument&rc=1&cc=cod>

Street children are perceived as vermin: petty thieves, often supernatural, indolent and a security risk. As DRC takes its first tentative steps toward democracy it will inevitably struggle to create the structures through which elected politicians can be effectively influenced and held accountable to their mandate during the course of their term. Within this context, street children have no influence and are likely to suffer the consequences of populist policies, which are unlikely to have their interests at heart.

#### **4 The approach of the APPG to its research**

We were very keen to listen to and learn from street children themselves. War Child arranged for us to meet groups of street children from two broad categories:

- children living and working on the street (mainly adolescents)
- children in care at centres for street children supported by War Child

Children from both categories included HIV/AIDS orphans, children accused of sorcery, children who had been forced into work on the streets because of poverty, and children formerly associated with fighting forces who had been detached from their families because of forced conscription by the army. During the course of these meetings we sought to triangulate the statements made by the children and establish verification.

We took full account of child protection guidelines provided by War Child, whose staff facilitated conversation, and have reflected these in the writing of this report. The names of all children referenced in this report are not the true names of those we interviewed, and we have not been specific with locations. We have also ensured that photos used cannot be used to identify individuals.

The learning we gained from the children we talked to on the streets, and the children and staff at the street children's centres helped us to develop a focus and structure for our interviews with other NGOs (both local and international), key civil servants, Ministers, representatives of the UK Government and the UN Mission. As we did in our conversations with the children we sought to triangulate statements made during the course of these interviews. As part of this process we referred to the emerging body of research on street children in DRC and also cross referenced reports by War Child, Save the Children and Human Rights Watch.

## 5 Causes of the crisis

The causes underlying the escalating street child crisis in Kinshasa are many and complex. The situations faced by many children result from a combination of interrelated social and economic forces.

### 5.1 Low income and lack of food security

DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world. Poverty exists in its most extreme forms there – with more than 1,200 people dying every day over and above what would normally be expected. Unemployment is at crisis levels in the cities, and especially in Kinshasa.

Children take up responsibility for income generation at increasingly younger ages. Children as young as six and seven are providing care for infants while their parents work. Children from the age of nine are required to seek work. Formal employment for these children rarely exists and so many are involved in hazardous work – carrying heavy loads for traders at the local market, collecting leaves from drainage channels and refuse heaps to sell for mulch, selling marijuana and alcohol, begging, prostitution and even stealing.

These children must necessarily develop their own networks in order to generate income and also to secure protection, shelter, food and where possible transport. Through these networks they become less dependent on their families and find themselves increasingly living and working on the streets where they might have better food security and a perceived level of independence and even security.



Some children are refused shelter at night when they return home unless they are able to provide a certain level of income. These children are especially vulnerable to detachment from their families.

### 5.2 Domestic violence

With extreme poverty and food insecurity come unmanageable levels of stress and tension. According to the Ministry of Women's and Family Affairs an increase in domestic violence is leading to both women and children living and working on the streets. Most of the children we spoke to had experienced some form of domestic violence and cited this as one of the reasons they left their families.

Domestic violence and other forms of abuse appear to be particularly

prevalent where a man actually takes his children with him to a new marriage. According to many of the children we spoke to, step parents often inflict abuse – both psychological and physical, including poisoning - upon children.

The perceived opportunities for generating income and obtaining food by working on the streets are strong pull factors for many children living with acute poverty. According to an NGO that co-ordinates the work of local organisations working with street children, where this pull factor is combined with the strong push factor of domestic violence and/or an apparent lack of care the population of street children increases significantly.

### 5.3 Women undermined

By tradition, women are the key duty bearers with regard to the rights of children in DRC. However, they are often denied the social position they require to fulfill this role.

Increasingly, as basic livelihood security of the family unit is threatened, men will seek divorce with the intention of establishing a relationship with another woman who has access to employment or runs her own income generating initiative. Many men involved in this practice divest themselves of responsibility for the children they leave in their first wife's care.

Many single parent mothers have had limited education or training. On the one hand, their income generating prospects are severely limited by this, while on the other, they have little awareness of their rights and the rights of their children, and even less capacity to secure them.

Because of the depth of poverty in DRC, the extended families of women in this situation are rarely able to provide support. With few options the woman will seek out work often necessarily leaving her children unattended. The older children might increasingly seek work for themselves on the streets and so become vulnerable to detachment from their family unit, especially as they are more likely to find the means through which they can secure food in this way.

Evelyn's mother suffers from epilepsy. This makes it difficult for her to work and generate income. Her father left them because of this. Evelyn and her mother turned to the extended family for support. But epilepsy is not well understood. Evelyn's mother was accused of witchcraft and shunned by her family. She became separated from Evelyn, who was a baby at the time. Evelyn's grandmother cared for her. She believed that her grandmother was her real mother. But as she grew up, other children would tease her that her mother was a witch. Eventually Evelyn tried to find her real mother and made contact with her. The reunion was catastrophic. She was accused of consorting with a witch and was also pushed onto the streets, where she joined her mother. Evelyn was repeatedly raped during her time on the street. At the age of twelve, she fell pregnant. It was at this point that Evelyn and her baby were identified by one of the abandoned children's centres supported by War Child.

Widespread corruption prevents any recourse to legal means through which these women might secure the right of support from their estranged husbands. Those who agitate for their rights are often beaten or sometimes accused of witchcraft. These women are shunned and pushed onto the streets along with their children.

## 5.4 HIV/AIDS

In desperation, some of the women who face these terrible circumstances turn to survival sex. Consequently, many have died through HIV/AIDS, their children becoming orphans. But this is not limited to women who are so brutally marginalised. According to Human Rights Watch, the national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in DRC is 4.2%. Although this is lower than other countries in southern and eastern Africa it is expected to have left some one million orphaned children in the DRC alone. In the face of the consequences of conflict, the extended family system is finding it increasingly untenable to provide support for children whose immediate parents have died. In the mean time, children with parents suffering from HIV/AIDS often withdraw themselves or are forced to leave school to provide care or to work on the streets in order to generate much needed income for their family.

The role of HIV/AIDS in the escalating street child crisis cannot be underestimated. AIDS is still not widely understood in DRC. It is often perceived to be transmitted through sorcery and witchcraft. Children whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS are vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft, which will lead to their being pushed out of their wider, extended family support network. These children have no where else to go but the streets.

## 5.5 Witchcraft and sorcery

The single largest contributing factor to the escalating street child crisis is the accusation of sorcery against children. Thousands of revivalist churches have emerged in Kinshasa, led by fetish pastors who fuse traditional beliefs in witchcraft with Christianity and profit from accusing children of witchcraft. The pastors exploit the locally perceived link between HIV/AIDS and witchcraft, which is widely believed to be the mechanism that transmits the disease. These fetish pastors charge substantial sums of money – often hundreds of dollars – to

Joseph was nine years old when his parents died of HIV/AIDS. This is a disease that is still not well understood by many people in DRC. Inevitably, Joseph became an additional mouth to feed within an already overstretched extended family. A local fetish pastor accused Joseph of bewitching his parents and causing their deaths. His extended family could not afford to pay the fees needed to perform the “exorcism” and so responded by beating Joseph, and actively spurning him, until he was finally pushed out onto the streets. Joseph would sleep at the local market, scavenging for food, occasionally stealing, and earning pennies by carrying heavy bags and sacks of produce for people. The police would regularly seek him out, also accusing him of witchcraft and telling him that he could not stay at the market. On one occasion he was kicked so hard by a police officer that two of his ribs were broken.

undertake exorcisms of children, the very children they have accused of witchcraft and of bewitching their (now dead) parents. Some of the exorcisms are brutal: children are forced to drink engine oil, beaten and starved. Boys have had their genitals cut off. Accused of sorcery and abused in this way many children abscond to establish a life for themselves on the street.

Accusing children of witchcraft has become such a profitable endeavour that there is evidence to suggest revivalist churches are now emerging in order to benefit aspiring pastors. This phenomenon is spreading beyond Kinshasa with serious implications for the street child crisis elsewhere in DRC. The most popular fetish pastors can attract congregations of several hundred people and so have a powerful constituency base.

In the mean time, the burden on the extended family is becoming untenable. With the massive growth in the population of AIDS orphans extended families are themselves accusing children of witchcraft as a mechanism of relinquishing responsibility for the child. Many children who have lost their parents inevitably have behavioural issues - perhaps something as mundane as bed wetting - which are used as a pretext for accusing the child of witchcraft. The child will then be beaten, starved and shunned by the family until they move out onto the streets.

The issue of witchcraft and sorcery is a complex one. The UK Ambassador to the DRC, Andy Sparks, put this into context for us:

***“Accusations of sorcery are a convenient excuse for a particularly cruel way of dealing with poverty, and religion is used as its pretext. Cruelty like this should be punished, regardless of whether it is executed in the name of religion or not.*”**

***It is not natural for Congolese to behave in this way. It is a recent phenomenon. The consequences of war and the subsequent massive aggravation of poverty is being exploited by a small number of pastors from private, revivalist churches who use vulnerable children as a platform upon which to exploit families that are struggling to feed themselves. And they will charge them to do this!”***

## **5.6 Children formally associated with fighting forces (CFAFFs)**

UN figures indicate that DRC has some 30,000 child soldiers, which does not include all those children who have been conscripted as porters, spies and sex slaves. War Child's research, published earlier this year, suggests that at least 30% of these children will not reintegrate with their families or communities. Inevitably, many of the children who are reintroduced to their



family after serving time in the army or in a militia have suffered trauma, abuse, have been forced and manipulated into grotesque acts, and now have major behavioural challenges.

These children, who might have been abducted into an armed group at as young an age as nine, return home as adolescents. Their families, already struggling to survive, then have an additional mouth to feed. Their ability to support the returning child is made very challenging by their severe behavioural difficulties. Almost inevitably, many of these children come into conflict with their families and communities, and end up working or even living on the streets. Some are re-mobilised by militia groups.

In Kinshasa there are groups of boys in particular who, conscripted at an early age by Laurent Kabila's forces, were moved around the country from bush training camp to makeshift barracks. When they finally arrived in Kinshasa, the army fed them. But the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process has not always succeeded, and as the security sector is being reformed there is of course no place for children in the army.

Many of these children came from the other side of the country. DRC is larger than the whole of north west Europe and so getting home to their families and communities is an impossible task – they cannot walk this distance safely unattended. There are no roads for buses. Using the river network would be dangerous unaccompanied and they cannot afford the air fare. Sadly, a significant proportion of the street child population of DRC are CFAFFs.

Andre was abducted at the age of nine from a boys school in eastern DRC. He was conscripted into Kabila's rebellion against Mobutu and sent on foot into Rwanda for training, where he stayed in the forest for 6 months. After this training Andre was marched to Katanga, which is almost the size of France, in the south of DRC. In Katanga he went through induction ceremonies that used 'magic' to protect him and make him bullet proof. From Katanga, Andre walked with other children and their commanders northwards to Kisangani, fighting Mobutu's troops along the way. Many of his friends died.

From Kisangani, he continued to Kinshasa also on foot. In its entirety, from when he was abducted, Andre walked a distance equivalent to walking from Kiev to London. During this time he witnessed terrifying acts: babies being pounded to death in pestles and mortar, women and girls being raped and shot through their genitals.

As part of the army he was regularly fed upon arriving in Kinshasa, but after demobilisation and disarmament he was unable to make the journey back to the east without support. He has not seen or heard from his parents in seven years. Andre now survives on the streets of Kinshasa and dreams of the day he can go home.

## **5.7 Factors that amplify the primary causes of the street child crisis**

The following factors significantly amplify the primary causes of the escalating street child crisis:

- the failure to address the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS and the belief that it is spread by witchcraft

- high levels of unemployment in the urban centres – which entrenches poverty and the negative coping mechanisms that it fosters
- lack of education for women, which is as much about the lack of value placed on women as it is about affordability – this massively limits women’s employment and income generating prospects on the one hand, while on the other leads to limited awareness of their rights, and limited understanding of how traditional beliefs are being exploited for vested interests
- the disempowerment of women who are unable to assert their rights and the rights of their children – this prevents women from securing the estate of their husbands after his death, often leaving them without a home, or it prevents their ability to protect their children against accusations of witchcraft
- on-going displacement from areas in which the consequences of the conflict are most acute and an over burdening of the extended family in host communities

## 6 Impunity and corruption

Corruption and impunity are closely linked. The exploitation of street children and abuse of their rights through corruption is enabled by impunity as well as by a clear recognition among those prosecuting corruption and abuse on street children that they can get away with it.

The DRC is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). But when children find themselves on the streets they often face extreme hazards. For the most part, these hazards are a function of the attitude and behaviour of the very people who are charged with the protection and support of children: their communities, and the State.

### 6.1 The police, soldiers and military police

The police act corruptly against street children and continue to do so with impunity. The ways in which this most commonly occurs includes:

- beating and insulting street children for alleged association with “sorcery”
- extorting money from street children through beating and psychological intimidation

Phillipe is fourteen. He had been accused of sorcery, which is what forced him out of his family and onto the streets three years ago. He collects leaves which he sells on to people who use them for mulch and composting as part of their subsistence farming practices in Kinshasa. He augments this income by helping to push carts around the city, transporting goods for local business people. He sleeps in a large pipe at night. The police will come round two or three nights a week and extort the money he has earned. Phillipe and his friends are regularly beaten. He told us of another boy, Joel, who at ten years old was selling leaves to some policemen. The policemen refused to pay him and he complained. So they beat him. Badly. So badly that after they had pushed him into a drainage ditch he did not have the strength to pull himself out and drowned.

- casual rape of street children, especially girls, and sexual coercion under the pretence of payment or protection
- using street children to scope the properties of those people the police are themselves targeting for burglary
- arbitrarily arresting and detaining street children under the pretext of vagrancy in areas where crimes have been committed and street children are present<sup>6</sup>



*P-Y is thirteen years old. After his parents died from AIDS his extended family accused him of witchcraft, and pushed him out onto the streets. He sleeps in a metal tube and huddles into his T-shirt for warmth. The police ambush him two or three times a week as he sleeps, and extort the small amount of money he has been able to beg or earn as a porter carrying bags for people.*

## 6.2 The judiciary

Although a juvenile justice code exists in draft form it is not applied in practice. Access to justice is a structural problem throughout the whole of DRC and most acutely affects those who are socially and economically excluded such as street children.

Street children are often assumed to have been involved in criminal activities in areas where they live and work. On this basis they are routinely arrested and confessions beaten from them.

Street children cannot afford legal representation, and most magistrates have neither knowledge of juvenile justice nor the inclination to provide it.

It has now been written into the Constitution that children should not be accused of witchcraft. This establishes the legal instrumentation through which those accusing children of witchcraft can be held to account. But again, street children cannot afford legal representation and there are few magistrates that would not use such a case to leverage a series of bribes from whoever had made the accusation, thereby enabling impunity and denying the child justice and the prospect of reintegration with their family.

<sup>6</sup> While in detention street children are beaten, denied food and held alongside adult detainees.

Fetish pastors are required to register themselves. Many do not and so are operating illegally. Because of the popular support they enjoy, neither government administrators nor politicians will seek to ensure effective licensing and monitoring of revivalist churches.

In the mean time, politicians and government officials use outdated laws from the Colonial era – which seek to prevent vagrancy and begging by children - as a pretext to pursue populist policies that are seen to deal with issues of crime and social disorder. These policies include the frequent round up and detention of large numbers of street children.

### **6.3 Politicians and the administration**

Virtually no political leadership is being shown in addressing the street child crisis in a socially progressive manner that secures the rights of the children themselves. Some of the politicians interviewed by the APPG were frank in their recognition that they would not seek to alienate fetish pastors and their popular constituencies, especially in the lead up to elections, on behalf of street children.

Politicians have regularly recruited street children to swell the ranks of their own rallies, and more insidiously in launching political demonstrations. As mentioned previously, Human Rights Watch reported that twenty street children involved in a political demonstration in Mbuji Mayi were killed by angry civilians in 2005 (Human Rights Watch. What Future? Street Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. April 2006). Only this September some 200 street children were detained for involvement in a political demonstration in Kinshasa. In this way, politicians lead street children into direct conflict with the law. They are not held to account for this and the police, operating to address an instance of social disorder, use the involvement of street children as a basis for establishing the widely held view that all street children are subversive and/or criminals. It is also an opportunity for the police to exploit street children for their own interests.

The police act within this accepted culture of abuse of street children, routinely arresting individual children who refuse to cooperate with them. These routine arrests serve as a means of intimidation and coercion in persuading street children to provide the police with money, sex, and support with hazardous law enforcement duties and/or crime.

### **6.4 Civilian abuse of street children**

Beyond accusations of sorcery and the subsequent beatings, insults and exclusion, individuals and communities are also involved in the abuse of street children by exploiting them in hazardous ways, including:

- prostitution
- selling/buying alcohol and marijuana
- petty crime
- collecting leaves from drainage ditches and refuse heaps
- and heavy labour (portering)



**Street children with bags of leaves collected from unsanitary locations such as drainage channels and refuse heaps. These leaves will be sold for a few cents for use as mulch.**

## **7 An overview of the response to the street child crisis**

In practice, DRC has only very limited social services. Civil servants and social workers are poorly trained and poorly paid. This requires that they spend time seeking alternative forms of income – time away from service provision - and it inevitably reinforces the culture of corruption.

It is civil society that is providing much of the frontline response to the street child crisis. Local church groups, local NGOs and international NGOs are all attempting to provide emergency care, protection and support for street children, as well as work with pastors and the broader community to help reintegrate them with their families and over come the phenomenon of accusing children of witchcraft.

There are some ninety centres across Kinshasa that each typically provide care and support for forty or so children: a total of 3,600 out of possibly 25,000 street children. The centres vary in their ability to provide effective care and, crucially, support the reintegration of children with their families. Many centres are run by local groups of volunteers with very few resources and only limited skills, while others are well resourced and professionally run. Some are run like orphanages and end up institutionalising the children,

while others emphasise family tracing, mediation and, ultimately, reunification.

Some local organisations are seeking to address this diverse response with training assistance and some degree of support with co-ordination. But these attempts are limited by a lack of resources and, in particular, the lack of a clear national planning and co-ordination framework.

It is within this context that international NGOs are seeking to provide capacity building support of local organisations, training of pastors, and resources for awareness raising campaigns. There are signs that some international NGOs seek to learn from each and even co-ordinate their interventions, but this is not happening nearly enough. As a consequence, there is a lack of coherence and focus in response to the street child crisis, with different organisations taking different approaches. For example, one international NGO we spoke to is funding a local counterpart to actually pay fetish pastors to perform exorcisms<sup>7</sup> of children accused of witchcraft. Not only does this endorse acceptance of the belief in children as witches (something that is clearly unconstitutional), but it actually reinforces the very economy that promotes accusations of witchcraft against children – the primary cause of the escalation of the street child crisis. This approach contrasts with and undermines the efforts of other international NGOs such as War Child and Save the Children, which are seeking to change attitudes toward witchcraft with regard to children, and specifically prevent accusations being made in the first place.

Problems like this could be avoided if there was clear planning and a co-ordination framework to address the street child crisis. A Mixed Commission within the Ministry of Social Affairs exists to help co-ordinate the response to this crisis but despite the willingness of civil servants, including social workers, they remain poorly paid; more often they are left unpaid for several months. For the most part, therefore, their work is ineffectual.

Nevertheless, planning is well underway for a strategy that will address the issue of *children in difficulty*, which will include street children. This approach, however, establishes three problems:

- firstly, it separates children in difficulty as a sub set of all children with regard to their rights. This serves to reinforce the way in which these children become defined by their *difficulty* (in this case, by virtue of their location - the streets) and the negative perceptions that this brings.
- Secondly, because it is not located within a broader plan to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (for all children) it

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<sup>7</sup> These exorcisms do not involve any form of physical abuse.

establishes only a part of the whole planning and policy architecture that is required as a core element of the terms of reference for all Ministries, NGOs and so on. This will lead to fragmented policy development and application with regard to the rights of children. Challenges with coherence will, therefore, persist.

- Although efforts will be made to ensure that relevant Ministries and civil society agencies refer to the framework for *children in difficulty*, the strategic emphasis will inevitably be placed on response to “a difficulty” – which we accept is critical – and so it will not foster preventative measures. With 47% of the population under 14 there are many children in DRC who are vulnerable to difficulty and much needs to be done to prevent crises such as that faced by street children getting worse.

A plan to implement the CRC will provide a platform upon which reintegration – whether in reference to a street child, child soldier, children in detention, AIDS orphan or a displaced child – can be clearly defined as a more meaningful social, psychological and economic process that requires long term commitment. In this way, regardless of who is supporting and managing the process of reintegration, there would be a common set of rights, criteria for their consistent interpretation, and parameters that would enable the widespread application of best practice. This would further engender accountability to the children and their families in terms of what support they could actually expect, a structural component of their own empowerment and development of the capability to promote meaningful reintegration.

Hundreds of thousands of children in DRC are displaced from their communities and sometimes families by conflict, including children who are living and working on the streets, or serving in militia. Until there is a consensus on what reintegration should mean efforts to bring these children back into the care and support of their families and communities will be *ad hoc*, occasionally damaging, and incoherent in their co-ordination. They so will not only under-utilise funds, but also knowledge.

## **8 Recommendations to the UK Government**

Below we set out a number of recommendations, which we commend to the UK Government.

In particular we urge the UK Government to press the Government of the DRC to establish a national, community-led Anti-Corruption and Impunity Commission, as the centre piece of a new drive to stop the abuse of rights of the millions of marginalised people in the DRC.

We call on the Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Margaret Beckett, to raise the UK Government's game on corruption and human rights abuses in the DRC, especially now there is a new Government there.

The present situation facing street children in the DRC is intolerable. Serious action against corrupt and exploitative politicians, officials and law enforcement officers is the single most important step that can be taken to protect all marginalised people, especially street children, and pave the way for preventing more children being forced into a life on the street.

## **8.1 Why the UK Government's commitment to the DRC is important**

Why is the street child crisis in DRC anything to do with the UK Government? Why should the UK Government be seeking to allocate more time, money and expertise to resolving this crisis when we are already doing so much in DRC?

- Street children in DRC suffer unimaginable poverty. The marginalisation and suffering that extreme poverty brings is a frightening indicator of state destabilisation. Destabilised states like DRC become havens of unrest, violence, and even regional and global insecurity. We have seen this already in DRC, which has involved six other countries in its war, and we are seeing this further afield in countries like Afghanistan. It is very much in our as well as broader international security interests, therefore, to work with partners from the developed world in creating stable, viable states throughout the developing world and in so doing combat poverty.
- It is also important that we recognise the established and deep commitment of the British public to addressing poverty, especially among the most marginalised people such as street children, as demonstrated through the mass participation in and commitment to the Make Poverty History campaign. This commitment is reflected in the Millennium Development Goals, which the UK Government has already signed up to.
- As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child the UK Government has committed itself to securing the rights of children by also recognising the importance of international cooperation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, not just the UK, in particular in developing countries. The British economy is one of the largest in the world, thereby establishing the UK as one of the most significant signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UK must, therefore, take a significant share of the responsibility for ensuring that the rights of children, especially marginalised children,



are made real in countries such as the DRC.

- Although the DRC has had its first elections in forty years this by no means establishes it as a democracy. The separation of powers and the development of an informed, democratic culture will take years to achieve. As the largest EU bilateral donor to the DRC the UK has a structural role to play in fostering democracy by ensuring accountability of the State to its people. In cooperation with other development partners of the DRC, the UK Government has significant leverage that must be applied on behalf of the people of the DRC. This is also a responsibility to the British tax payer in terms of ensuring value for money.

## **8.2 What the UK Government is currently doing**

The APPG on Street Children fully supports the efforts of the UK Government in DRC.

DRC is not an ex-colony of the UK or a member of the Commonwealth. It is not an Anglophone country and the UK has very limited commercial interests there. Therefore, the significant assistance that the UK Government is providing to the DRC on behalf of the British public is a genuine expression of compassion and support within the UK's commitment to addressing poverty.

This is clearly expressed by the Department for International Development, which is investing upward of £30 million per year, and more broadly by the FCO, which has invested upwards of £30million in the election process in DRC. It is further recognised by the substantial funds we also provide to multi-lateral donors of the DRC, not least the EU and the UN. This is, possibly, an emerging paradigm of development assistance in conflict affected areas that fundamentally challenges the cynical view that *we do not have friends, only interests*.

The expression of the Secretary of State for International Development's own commitment, through his trips to DRC at crucial points in the peace and election processes, and his willingness to engage NGOs and involve himself in the discourse concerning the future of DRC is also very much appreciated. DfID and FCO staff in DRC have continued to prove very helpful and cooperative, and work very hard to ensure that the UK Government's contribution is an effective one.

Because the UK Government is the single largest EU bilateral donor to the DRC, it must be ever mindful that value for money is a primary criterion in ensuring that the commitment of the British tax payer genuinely protects the

most marginalised people living in the DRC, and enables the effective representation of their interests. With this in mind, the way in which money is spent is, therefore, as important as what money is spent on. For the APPG the recommendations mapped out below are about the unique leadership position that the UK has taken in its level of support for the DRC and how this can be used to ensure that all such support is increasingly effective and actually makes a positive difference in the lives of the people it is meant to help.

## **8.3 Recommendations**

### **8.3.1 Promoting education sector reform/development and livelihoods**

#### **Children**

Investment in education sector reform and development - incorporating both formal and non-formal education - is crucial to the DRC.

Education of women will reduce their vulnerability and indirectly the vulnerability of their children. The education of children, especially marginalised children, will establish a key socialising process in its own right, a basis upon which exclusion – the main process through which children end up on the street - can be overcome. Crucially, education *per se* will help address the deep-seated belief in witchcraft and subsequent vulnerability of many children.

The British Government should use its influence to ensure that education sector reform and development support from the World Bank and other development partners of the DRC benefits marginalised children, especially street children.

Within this, it is vital that the issue of free education is considered as only a part of the formula for ensuring widespread access to education. Many marginalised children provide child care and/or are involved in income generating activities in support of their families and so would still not be able to go to school under a no fee system.

Adolescents, particularly those living on the streets, many of whom already earn enough money to pay for school fees, are perceived negatively by teachers and so excluded from school. These adolescents will also exclude themselves because they do not want to be included in classes with younger children. It is demeaning for them.

In order to take these issues into account when developing a support programme for education reform and development the UK Government must

require the World Bank and other investors to work closely with NGOs in ensuring meaningful consultation with marginalised children and their communities. Without this, such support will fail.

## **Women**

Access is also a major issue for women. In addition, it is vital that education reform and development for women is linked to livelihood support. In this respect, education must incorporate functional literacy, practical skills training and access to enterprise nurseries as a platform upon which women will empower themselves and secure the rights of their children.

We strongly recommend, therefore, that the UK Government consults closely with civil society, especially local and international NGOs and churches, the Government of the DRC, other international partners and local business networks in the development of a national strategy that will support the establishment of micro-enterprise nurseries, training and practical income generating initiatives for women – linked to access to education - across acutely vulnerable communities from which many street children come. This will provide the architecture through which local and international NGOs as well as other development partners of DRC can invest resources in a focused, coherent and co-ordinated way.

### **8.3.2 Addressing accusations of sorcery and witchcraft**

The FCO and DfID must explicitly reference marginalised children in order to enable UK based international NGOs to apply for funding to specifically address the causes of the street child crisis (eg. through the civil society challenge fund). This reference will also serve as a basis for diplomatic initiatives to enroll other international partners to provide resources to address the primary causes of the street child crisis and support the government of the DRC, in partnership with civil society, in developing a national strategy through which these resources can be effectively applied.

The strategy and subsequent projects should include initiatives that:

- Train and provide salaries for a small number of magistrates to deal with juvenile justice matters (especially constitutional breaches such as accusations of sorcery against children)
- Train and enrol lawyers in the juvenile justice code
- Establish legal aid support and develop co-ordinated networks of legal practices to target cases where children have been accused of witchcraft
- Resource the exposure of these cases as high profile *wins* across the media

The strategy should also pay particular attention to:

- Strengthening the capacity of the State to properly license and monitor the activities of revivalist churches and especially their pastors.
- The use of mass media opportunities to address awareness, and understanding of personal responsibility in preventing children from being accused of sorcery and witchcraft.

At the same time, the strategy must require the ever growing network of revivalist churches and pastors to be engaged directly. This is essential if pastors are to understand their Constitutional obligations and serve as genuine community leaders, as well as identify what support they might need to claim such a role. In such a capacity pastors could become a meaningful community focal point, providing the following support to their congregations:

- Para-legal services, especially to marginalised people such as women with children who have been abandoned by their husbands, and widows who are denied any of their husband's estate by his family
- Counselling and mediation in family disputes
- Awareness raising and educating their congregations with regard to HIV/AIDS and what can be done to prevent its spread, and how they can better respond to its presence in their community
- Awareness raising and education of their congregations with regard to the rights of street children and the community's responsibility to provide protection and support
- Provision of functional literacy classes for adults, especially women, and older children
- Mobilising interest and promoting self-help and income generating initiatives within their communities

### **8.3.3 Addressing corruption and impunity**

The UK Government is quite rightly emphasising its support for security sector reform and governance. It is clear that a crucial part of the interface between security sector reform and governance on the one hand, and vital socio-economic development on the other is addressing corruption and impunity. Unless these issues are tackled directly, efforts to promote governance and security sector reform will fail, and the possibility of fostering democracy through the accountability of politicians and administrators to the people will be lost.

While the DRC has already attempted to establish an anti-corruption commission, this failed because it did not – predictably – have “buy-in” at the highest political levels. However, this does not mean that the idea of an anti-

corruption and impunity commission should be shelved.

The APPG strongly recommends that an anti-corruption and impunity commission be re-established but approached differently, more innovatively, by making better use of the media, and ensuring that it fosters community support and capacity to address these challenges directly.

The commission should fundamentally involve international actors at an operational level, including NGOs, as well as a broad base of local stakeholders. The terms of reference for the commission must include:

- Awareness raising, education and the promotion of a better understanding of the rights of marginalised people, especially children, and the responsibilities of key duty bearers
- Establishment of an inclusive, on-going national dialogue on corruption and impunity by mobilising interest and concern in their effects and to consult communities in developing solutions
- Promotion of this dialogue through mass media and community based outlets (eg. churches and so on),
- Training, payment of salaries and protection of a task force of magistrates and lawyers in dealing with corruption and impunity
- Establishment of a legal aid fund to tackle targeted cases of corruption and impunity, and the promotion of these cases as high profile *wins* across the media.
- Training, salaries and monitoring of specialised police units, which deal specifically with children in conflict with the law
- The development of strategies to address the root causes of corruption and human rights abuses among marginalised people
- Campaigning throughout civil and state structures, and co-ordination with them in preventing and responding to corruption

The anti-corruption and impunity commission must be fundamentally linked to the achievement of human rights targets and a basis for sanctioning politicians, senior administrators, law enforcement and security personnel. This is not to say that we are recommending sanctioning and, therefore, punishing the very public our assistance is given to serve. We are recommending that sanctions are targeted at individuals and organisations with particular responsibilities concerning the rights of marginalised people –

not least the police, and governors.

The UK Government, through the FCO, should lead moves to impose sanctions with other EU heads of mission against local politicians and senior law enforcement officers, who are culpable in the arbitrary arrest, beating and death of street children, or in the exploitation of street children for political purposes. The sanctions should include the denial of visas and the freezing of assets held by these politicians and senior officials outside the DRC. These sanctions should also be applied to those involved in accusing children of sorcery and other human rights abuses.

#### **8.3.4 The link between governance, social development and the need to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The current political process is vital to security, the possibility of good governance and the conditions required for development. However, it will not bring hope to all people in the Congo.

The most marginalised are excluded from this process and have no means of securing their rights or addressing their needs through it. We have already seen how marginalised people were exploited during the first presidential elections<sup>8</sup>. Even for those who are able to vote, and perhaps use even more powerful forms of political action, the conditions through which they might be able to hold their newly appointed representatives to account do not exist.

The exclusion of street children, who represent a much wider constituency of marginalised people, from the political process is absolute, and it is absolute because they have very little social agency.

In the mean time, the failure of governance has had a terrible effect on the lives of marginalised people. However, many of the issues facing the millions of marginalised people in the DRC are not only the result of a failure of governance. They are a reflection of a broken society.

In many cases, families themselves are now unviable social and economic units. Divorce rates are very high, the burden on children to work in order to support the family unit has never been so intense, and HIV/AIDS is leaving many children orphaned. The extended family structure has begun to break down so drastically that children are left without care or pushed onto the streets.

These issues are not related to security sector reform or governance. They are acute social issues that require immediate attention.

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<sup>8</sup> More than 700 street working people who had been paid by political agents to attend a rally during the last Presidential round were arrested and detained for several days. More than 200 of them were children

Community-based, people-led social development programmes, therefore, need to be run alongside the structural support given by the likes of the UK Government to the governance and security sector reform processes.

The APPG recognises that the UK Government cannot possibly provide all the assistance that is needed.

There are, however, some strategic issues that it can provide expertise, and limited financial support and diplomatic leverage to enrol support from other development partners in creating the conditions to foster the type of social development programmes that DRC so desperately needs. The UK Government must base this support on a plan to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as other key human rights conventions.

With reference to the plan to implement the CRC it must seek to promote awareness of the rights of children, the take up of responsibility for these rights among key duty bearers, and ensure the establishment of the structures that will allow children access to the services they need, such as education. The plan for the implementation of the CRC must be framed by the social context of the DRC in which families are fragmenting, and the social agency required to develop viable livelihoods is unraveling. In this way the plan must establish a link between the assistance the UK Government and other partners are already providing for key issues such as governance and security sector reform, and social development.

Without such a planning architecture, the efforts of state, civil and other actors will neither be focused or coherent, thereby limiting the social impact of development projects.

The key actor in this regard is UNICEF. Currently, UNICEF is working on post-conflict programming. No work has been undertaken in DRC to develop a plan for the implementation of the UN CRC at a national level for all children, as an overarching architecture for child rights programming. We ask that the UK Government influences and works with UNICEF by:

- Supporting the Government of the DRC to develop a plan for the implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child,
- Fostering the conditions that encourage the investment in the capacity of local structures to service and protect the rights of marginalised children
- Agreeing targets to improve the status of marginalised children with the

## Government of the DRC.

Key elements of the plan to implement the UN CRC will provide the legal instrumentation to secure more effective governance on child rights issues *per se* and so will reinforce the assistance being provided by the UK Government on governance issues. This will also establish the basis upon which human rights performance indicators can be agreed and monitored as part of addressing the effects of corruption and impunity at a broader level – information that in time will be used by an increasingly aware electorate to inform their voting behaviour.

Progress made in planning for the implementation of instruments such as the UN CRC should be reflected in UK Government's country planning through specific mention of marginalised groups such as street children. This in turn will ensure that funding instruments such as the Civil Society Challenge Fund can be used to access resources and leverage diplomatic support to foster the change in attitudes needed to overcome the exclusion of marginalised groups.

Finally, the plan to implement the UN CRC must be accompanied by a clear resourcing strategy. The excellent, co-ordinated relationship between DfID and the FCO in DRC will be a clear strength in lobbying other heads of mission, and especially the EU, in sourcing the funds needed to implement the plan. This will create a basis for international NGOs and major development partners of the DRC to undertake more co-ordinated appeals and fundraising efforts.

## 9 References

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International Crisis Group. Escaping the Conflict Trap: Promoting Good Governance in the Congo. July 2006

Save the Children. The Invention of "Child Witches". February 2006

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## Some useful websites:

<http://www.warchild.org.uk>  
<http://www.monuc.org/News.aspx?newsID=11448&menuOpened=DRC%20profile>  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cg.html>  
[http://www.alertnet.org/db/cp/dr\\_congo.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/db/cp/dr_congo.htm)  
<http://www.alertnet.org/db/cp/uk.htm>  
<http://hrw.org/reports/2006/drc0406/5.htm>  
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/OCHA-64BSJM?OpenDocument&rc=1&cc=cod>

## 10 Glossary

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>APPG</b>   | All Party Parliamentary Group                     |
| <b>CFAFFs</b> | Children Formerly Associated with Fighting Forces |
| <b>CRC</b>    | Convention on the Rights of the Child             |
| <b>DDR</b>    | Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration     |
| <b>DfID</b>   | Department for International Development          |
| <b>DRC</b>    | Democratic Republic of Congo                      |
| <b>EU</b>     | European Union                                    |
| <b>FCO</b>    | Foreign and Commonwealth Office                   |
| <b>MDGs</b>   | Millennium Development Goals                      |
| <b>MONUC</b>  | United Nations Mission to the Congo               |
| <b>NGO</b>    | Non Governmental Organisation                     |
| <b>UN</b>     | United Nations                                    |

## 11 Acknowledgements

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All photographs by Russell Brown MP and Mark Waddington.

Our apologies to UNICEF whose staff were on retreat for the duration of our visit. However, we are aware that War Child and others we met work closely with you and so we hope we will have reflected the key issues that you would otherwise have raised with us.

Finally, our thanks to Kimbembe Mazumga for his time. Mr Mazumga was Governor of Kinshasa until September. During the tenure of his office street children had been rounded up on several occasions and held in detention in appalling conditions, mainly without charge. Many children were beaten by police, some were murdered by them. We hope that the subsequent Governors of Kinshasa and of all DRC's provinces will recognise the rights of street children. We also hope that they will pursue policies consistent with the recommendations put forward in this report, and deal robustly with those pastors who accuse children of sorcery and those policemen who extort from, beat and murder street children.



Edward Leigh MP and Russell Brown MP, Co-Chairs of the APPG on Street Children, with street children in Kinshasa