

HANDBOOK on
**Child Protection
for United Nations
Uniformed Personnel**

United Nations
Department of Peace Operations



This publication was made possible through generous funding from Canada. The handbook was produced in 2024 by the Child Protection Team, Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training, United Nations Department of Peace Operations in consultation with deployed child protection staff and focal points and military and police child protection focal points in UN peacekeeping operations, the Office of Military Affairs, the Police Division, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the United Nations Children's Fund. Acknowledgement is due to the external expert who wrote the handbook, Ms. Jeyashree Nadarajah.

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Reference number 2025.13

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BHQ	Brigade headquarters	MARA.....	Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangement
CAAC	Children and armed conflict	MDMP.....	Military decision-making process
CAAFAG	Children associated with armed forces or armed groups	MEDEVAC ...	Medical evacuation
CAN	Community Alert Network	MRM.....	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
CASEVAC	Casualty evacuation	NGO	Non-governmental organization
CLA	Community Liaison Assistant	OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
CONOPS	Concept of operations	OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
CONPLAN ...	Contingency plan	OMA.....	Office of Military Affairs
COP	Community-oriented policing	OPLAN.....	Operational plan
CPA	Child Protection Adviser	OPORD.....	Operational order
CPFP	Child protection focal point	OSRSG.....	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General
CPS/U	Child Protection Section/Unit	PBPO.....	Policy and Best Practices Officer
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	PC	Police Commissioner
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence	PD.....	Police Division
CTFMR	Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting	PKI	Peacekeeping-Intelligence
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration	PHQ	Police headquarters
DPO	Department of Peace Operations	POC	Protection of civilians
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs	ROE.....	Rules of Engagement
DOS	Department of Operational Support	SHQ	Sector headquarters
DSS	Department of Safety and Security	SOP	Standard operating procedure
DUF.....	Directive on the Use of Force	SSR	Security sector reform
EWI	Early warning indicator	SVC	Sexual violence in conflict
EW/RR	Early warning/rapid response	UN	United Nations
FC	Force Commander	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FHQ	Force headquarters	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
FPU.....	Formed Police Unit	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
FRAGO.....	Fragmentary order	UNICEF.....	United Nations Children's Fund
IDP	Internally displaced person	UNMEM	United Nations Military Expert on Mission
IEU	Internal Evaluation Unit	UNPOL	United Nations Police
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Center	UNSC	United Nations Security Council
JOC	Joint Operations Center		
JPT	Joint Protection Team		
HQ	Headquarters		
MACR	Minimum age of criminal responsibility		

Introduction

The Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017) emphasizes child protection as a shared responsibility among civilian, military, and police components in United Nations (UN) missions. While civilian child protection staff play a key role, the involvement of UN military and police personnel is essential for the full implementation of the mandate.

Recognizing this, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) developed this Handbook on Child Protection for United Nations Uniformed Personnel to equip military and police personnel, including those appointed as child protection focal points, with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively fulfil their roles in protecting children in the mission area.

This handbook complements existing DPO guidance and training on child protection, including the Core Pre-deployment Training Materials, Lesson 2.6 (February 2025), the Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations and accompanying Specialized Training Materials (May 2023), the Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (July 2023), and the Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (November 2023).

PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

This handbook provides practical guidance to assist UN military and police personnel in fulfilling their child protection responsibilities. Specifically, it aims to:

- Provide an overview of the child protection mandate, international legal frameworks and the roles and responsibilities of military and police personnel.
- Offer guidance and practical tools for assessing child protection risks and develop strategies to respond effectively in conflict settings.
- Present component-specific guidance for military and police personnel to address child protection issues.
- Enhance coordination among military and police child protection focal points, civilian child protection staff, and external actors.
- Ensure that UN peacekeeping operations and activities do not inadvertently increase risks to children or undermine their rights and well-being.
- Equip UN military and police personnel with resources to help prevent and respond to grave violations against children.

While the handbook contains guidance addressed to all UN military and police personnel, readers should keep in mind that the specific actions required of them in order to fulfill their child protection responsibilities might vary depending on several

factors, including their individual functions in the mission, their position in the military and police chains of command, etc. Consequently, not all personnel are expected to perform all the tasks and responsibilities outlined in this handbook.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The primary target audience of this handbook is UN military and police personnel deployed to UN peacekeeping operations, including military and police child protection focal points responsible for advising and guiding their colleagues in integrating child protection considerations across all aspects of their operations.

STRUCTURE

This handbook is divided into three parts:

Part 1: The Child Protection Mandate and United Nations Uniformed Personnel

This section introduces the foundational principles and policies guiding child protection in UN peacekeeping operations. It covers the international legal framework, key responsibilities of uniformed personnel, and the evolution of UN Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict. It also emphasizes the importance of operationalizing child protection within the military and police components, including by providing support to monitoring and reporting grave violations and implementing early warning systems to prevent and mitigate threats to children.

Part 2: Child Protection Tasks of the United Nations Military Component

This section focuses on specific child protection tasks assigned to the military component. It outlines strategies for engaging with parties to the conflict, considerations for military planning and operations, and the role of military personnel in protecting children from grave violations in the mission area.

Part 3: Child Protection Tasks of the United Nations Police Component

This section highlights the responsibilities of police personnel on child protection. It includes considerations for police planning and operations, guidance on mentoring and advising host-State police, ensuring child-sensitive approaches in apprehension, arrest, and detention, and implementing community-oriented policing strategies that prioritize child protection.

Each chapter is supplemented with additional tools, forms, checklists, or templates to enhance practical application, support decision-making, and reinforce the integration of child protection into the day-to-day tasks of military and police personnel.

EXERCISES: A SUPPLEMENTARY TOOL

A complementary set of exercises was developed to further support the practical application of the guidance outlined in this handbook. These exercises aim to reinforce understanding, foster critical thinking, encourage reflection, and provide opportunities to apply child protection considerations in various scenarios.

While the handbook serves as a foundational resource for knowledge and reference, the exercises provide an opportunity to deepen skills and build confidence among UN military and police personnel, particularly child protection focal points, in integrating child protection into their daily responsibilities.

NAVIGATING THE HANDBOOK

The handbook includes links that facilitate easy navigation between sections and provide quick access to supplementary references and resources. Throughout the handbook, the following icons are used to highlight important information.



Additional Guidance Icon
Indicates supplementary guidance or tools included in the handbook



Important Information Icon
Highlights crucial information relevant to the reader



Exercises Icon
Highlights exercises designed to enhance understanding and application. The titles of these exercises are included at the end of each chapter, with the full exercises available in a separate document

TABLE 1: Navigating the Handbook

Self-assessment

This self-assessment aims to evaluate the knowledge and understanding of child protection in UN peacekeeping operations, with a focus on the responsibilities and frameworks guiding the actions of UN uniformed personnel. By reflecting on their current knowledge and confidence levels, users can identify areas where further learning may be beneficial.

INSTRUCTIONS

- For each statement, rate your confidence on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the minimum and 5 the maximum). If you feel uncertain about a topic, you can refer to the relevant chapter in the handbook and consult the associated exercises in the separate supplementary document. This approach will help you pinpoint specific areas for further study and professional development.
- Once you have completed the self-assessment, review your ratings. If you score three or lower on any statement, it is recommended that you revisit the relevant chapters and consider completing the corresponding exercises for further study. This self-assessment will help you identify areas where you can enhance your knowledge and competence, ensuring that you are better equipped to fulfil your role in child protection within UN peacekeeping operations.

Statement	Rate Your Confidence
	(circle one)
1 I understand the children and armed conflict (CAAC) agenda and how it shapes the child protection mandate in UN peacekeeping operations. <i>Learn more: Chapter 1: The Child Protection Mandate in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations</i>	1 2 3 4 5
2 I know how to identify the responsibilities of UN uniformed personnel as outlined in the mandate. <i>Learn more: Chapter 1: The Child Protection Mandate in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations</i>	1 2 3 4 5
3 I am aware of the international legal frameworks that protect the rights of children in armed conflict and guide the actions of UN uniformed personnel. <i>Learn more: Chapter 1: The Child Protection Mandate in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations</i>	1 2 3 4 5
4 I understand the Policy on child protection in UN peace operations (2017) and how it applies to UN uniformed personnel. <i>Learn more: Chapter 1: The Child Protection Mandate in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations</i>	1 2 3 4 5

Statement	Rate Your Confidence
5 I know the key responsibilities of uniformed child protection focal points (CPFPs). <i>Learn more: Chapter 2: Operationalizing the Child Protection Mandate within the Military and Police Components</i>	(circle one) 1 2 3 4 5
6 I am aware of the role of the Senior Child Protection Adviser (CPA) and the Child Protection Section/Unit (CPS/U) in implementing the child protection mandate in the mission, and I know how to coordinate with them effectively. <i>Learn more: Chapter 3: Coordination and Collaboration with Other Stakeholders</i>	1 2 3 4 5
7 I am aware of and understand the coordination mechanisms between UN uniformed personnel, UN mission stakeholders, and external actors on child protection. <i>Learn more: Chapter 3: Coordination and Collaboration with Other Stakeholders</i>	1 2 3 4 5
8 I understand the role of UN uniformed personnel in supporting monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children. <i>Learn more: Chapter 4: Supporting Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations against Children</i>	1 2 3 4 5
9 I can identify the six grave violations against children in armed conflict. <i>Learn more: Chapter 4: Supporting Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations against Children</i>	1 2 3 4 5
10 I can utilize early warning indicators to detect key threats and assess potential risks to children in armed conflict situations. <i>Learn more: Chapter 5: Strengthening Early Warning Systems to Prevent Violations against Children</i>	1 2 3 4 5
11 I am knowledgeable about the procedures for handling and responding to the needs of children associated with armed forces or armed groups. <i>Learn more: Chapter 6: Dealing with Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups</i>	1 2 3 4 5
12 I am aware of the UN standards of conduct and the safe interaction principles that guide UN uniformed personnel when engaging with children. <i>Learn more: Chapter 7: Safeguarding Children</i>	1 2 3 4 5

For UN Military Personnel Only	
Statement	Rate Your Confidence
13 I am familiar with how the UN military component supports engagement with parties to conflict on child protection. <i>Learn more: Chapter 8: Engaging with Parties to the Conflict on the Protection of Children</i>	(circle one) 1 2 3 4 5
14 I know how to integrate child protection into military planning and operations, including threat assessment, risk analysis, and contingency planning. <i>Learn more: Chapter 9: Child Protection Considerations in Military Planning and Operations</i>	1 2 3 4 5
For UN Police Personnel Only	
15 I know how to integrate child protection into police planning and operations, including threat assessment, risk analysis, and contingency planning. <i>Learn more: Chapter 10: Child Protection Considerations in Police Planning and Operations</i>	1 2 3 4 5
16 I understand the community-oriented policing approach and its relevance to child protection. <i>Learn more: Chapter 10: Child Protection Considerations in Police Planning and Operations</i>	1 2 3 4 5
17 I know how to mentor and advise the host-State police on the apprehension, arrest, and detention of children, and on criminal investigations involving children. <i>Learn more: Chapter 11: Mentoring, Advising and Strengthening the Capacity of the Host-State Police on Child Protection</i>	1 2 3 4 5

1

PART 1: **The Child Protection** **Mandate and** **United Nations** **Uniformed Personnel**

CHAPTER 1

The Child Protection Mandate in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

The protection of children in armed conflict is a fundamental peace and security concern, highlighted in numerous UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on children and armed conflict (CAAC) and resolutions establishing and renewing the mandates of UN peacekeeping operations.¹ These resolutions have progressively shaped and refined the child protection mandate in UN peacekeeping operations, assigned specific responsibilities to the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and included dedicated provisions within peacekeeping mandates to ensure the protection and well-being of children in conflict zones.

The protection of civilians (POC) is central to the UN's peace and security efforts, authorized through UNSC mandates and recognized as a strategic agenda. Under international law, host States bear the primary responsibility for protecting civilians. When host governments are unable or unwilling to fulfil this responsibility, UN peacekeeping operations with a POC mandate are obligated to act, using all necessary means, including force, to prevent, deter, or respond to threats of violence against civilians, including children.²

POC and CAAC are distinct but interconnected agendas that require coordinated implementation in UN peacekeeping operations. On the ground, POC and CAAC can overlap, as complex POC threats typically involve child protection needs. Therefore, UN military and police personnel must consider the impact of their POC activities on children, ensuring that broader POC measures also address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children. Effective coordination between POC and child protection efforts is essential to provide comprehensive security and support to children affected by armed conflict.³ The CAAC agenda also intersects with the conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and the broader human rights mandates of UN peacekeeping operations.

All UN military and police personnel have a role to play in preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children in their areas of operation.⁴ The specific ways in which individual UN military and police personnel will be called upon to contribute to these whole-of-mission efforts may vary depending on a number of factors, such as the role/function they will perform during their deployment, their position in the military or police chains of command, and their area of deployment, and might be subject to change during their time in the mission. While the roles played by UN military and police personnel have significant overlaps, they also involve distinct responsibilities and set of obligations. As a first step to effectively fulfil their role in protecting children, UN military and police personnel should:

- Be familiar with the direction and guidance provided by the UN Security Council to UN peacekeeping operations on the protection of children in armed conflict.
- Understand the child protection mandate of the mission.
- Utilize knowledge of the international legal framework and relevant international guidelines that protect children in armed conflict to assess operational realities in the mission area.
- Understand how these legal obligations influence and guide the work of UN military and police personnel in protecting children.



This is a sample mandate focusing specifically on the child protection tasks assigned to a UN peacekeeping operation. It illustrates how the Security Council incorporates child protection considerations into its decision-making process when deciding on peacekeeping mandates.

The Security Council,

1. Mandate authorization and priority on the protection of civilians:
 - **Decides** that [UN Mission] shall have the mandate to protect civilians, authorizes the use of all necessary means to implement this mandate and requests the Secretary-General to report any obstacles to its implementation.
 - **Stresses** that the protection of civilians shall be prioritized in decisions regarding the use of mission capacity and resources.
2. Protection of civilians:
 - **Directs** [UN Mission] to use all necessary means to ensure effective, timely, and dynamic protection of civilians under threat of physical violence, irrespective of the source or location of such violence, through a comprehensive and integrated approach.
 - **Calls** for specific protection for women and children, by deploying Child Protection Advisers, Women Protection Advisers, and uniformed and civilian Gender Advisers.
 - **Emphasizes** the need to deter, prevent, and respond to sexual and gender-based violence by actively intervening to protect civilians threatened by or affected by sexual violence.
 - **Directs** [UN Mission] to take all feasible measures to prevent the military use of schools by armed forces and armed groups, deter such use by parties to the conflict, and facilitate the continuation of education during situations of armed conflict.
3. Monitoring, investigating, and reporting on violations:
 - **Instructs** [UN Mission] to monitor, investigate, verify, and report on violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including against women and children. This includes sexual and gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence, and grave violations against children.

- **Urges** [UN Mission] to enhance mechanisms for timely reporting of incidents, and to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism for violations and abuses against children.
4. Engagement with parties to the conflict on ending and preventing grave violations:
- **Strongly urges** all parties to the conflict to cease all grave violations against children, comply with relevant international norms, and work towards implementing comprehensive action plans to end and prevent these violations.
 - **Directs** [UN Mission] to engage with all relevant parties to advance compliance with child protection norms and facilitate dialogue aimed at releasing children addressing accountability for grave violations.
5. Child protection as a cross-cutting issue:
- **Requests** [UN Mission] to fully integrate child protection as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate. This includes ensuring that child protection considerations are central to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes and security sector reform (SSR) efforts.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

The international framework for protecting children is comprehensive, comprising of a series of legal instruments, norms, guidelines, and policies. These can be broadly classified into four categories:

- **International legal and normative framework:** This includes international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law, and relevant regional legal instruments.
- **UN Security Council framework:** Comprising resolutions on children and armed conflict and mandates of UN peacekeeping operations. This includes provisions on child protection.
- **UN Department of Peace Operations framework:** This includes the Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017) and other policies and standards of conduct for all peacekeeping personnel.⁵
- **International guidelines:** These include the Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2007)⁶, the Safe Schools Declaration (2015)⁷ and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict (2014), the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (2017)⁸, the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive weapons in Populated Areas (2022)⁹, and international standards specific to justice for children. While not legally binding, these represent political commitments endorsed by Member States and provide minimum standards for the protection of children in armed conflict.

As UN military and police personnel, there is a duty to understand and adhere to international norms and standards regarding child protection, which define and regulate roles and responsibilities and serve as guiding principles for actions in the mission area.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Evolution of UN Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict

The 1996 Graça Machel report on the impact of armed conflict on children laid the foundation for the children and armed conflict agenda, resulting in the establishment of the initial mandate for children affected by war.¹⁰

Since 1999, UNSC resolutions on children and armed conflict have become essential pillars in the normative protection framework for children. These resolutions illustrate a growing awareness of the unique vulnerabilities faced by children in war zones and the international community's commitment to their protection. Each successive resolution builds upon the previous ones, addressing gaps and introducing new measures to strengthen collective responses to the complex challenges encountered by children in conflict situations.



*Juba: Some 18,000 peacekeepers work in partnership with the Government and people of South Sudan to help this young nation navigate the difficult but necessary transition from war to peace.
Photo: Isaac Billy/UNMISS*

Resolution 1261 (1999) placed the issue of children affected by conflict on the agenda of the Security Council. The resolution condemned grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict, urged parties to conflict to take into consideration the protection of children, and urged the United Nations and Member States to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children.

Resolution 1314 (2000) reaffirmed that the deliberate targeting of children may constitute a threat to international peace and security and requested an annual report from the Secretary-General. It also urged all parties to conflict to respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict and urged Member States to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

Resolution 1379 (2001) requested the Secretary-General to list parties to conflict that recruit or use children in the following year's report.

Resolution 1460 (2003) called for the application of relevant international norms and standards, supports the UN entering into dialogue with parties to conflict that recruit or use children and developing clear and time bound action plans to end this practice. The resolution requested specific proposals to ensure more efficient and effective monitoring and reporting. It also requested the Secretary-General to include the issue in country-specific reports.

Resolution 1539 (2004) requested the Secretary-General to devise a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the recruitment and use of children and other violations and expressed the Council's intention to impose targeted and gradual measures against parties that continue to recruit and use children.

Resolution 1612 (2005) endorsed the proposed Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and established the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.¹¹

Resolution 1882 (2009) established killing and maiming, and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children as an additional violation triggering the listing of parties to conflict in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Resolution 1998 (2011) established attacks on schools and hospitals, and attacks on (or threats) against protected personnel as an additional violation triggering the listing of parties to conflict in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Resolution 2068 (2012) expressed deep concern about perpetrators who persisted in committing violations against children and reiterated the Council's readiness to adopt targeted and graduated measures against them. The Council also called on the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to consider options for increasing pressure on these persistent perpetrators and asked the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to brief on the delisting process.

Resolution 2143 (2014) urged parties to the conflict to respect the civilian character of schools and to protect schools from attacks and use, the mainstreaming of child protection in security sector reforms, child protection training for UN uniformed personnel and for military personnel from Member States and the need to incorporate child protection provisions in peace agreements.

Resolution 2225 (2015) established the abduction of children as an additional violation triggering the listing of parties to conflict in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Resolution 2427 (2018) provided a framework for mainstreaming protection, rights, well-being, and empowerment of children throughout the conflict cycle, as well as in sustaining peace efforts.

Resolution 2601 (2021) condemned attacks and threats of attack against attacks against schools, educational facilities and civilians connected with schools. It further emphasized the need to facilitate the continuation of education in situations of armed conflict.

Resolution 2764 (2024) highlighted the need to facilitate adequate and sustainable child protection capacities in United Nations peace operations, including in the context of transitions to or from UN missions.

B. International Child Protection Framework Overview

International Humanitarian Law

International humanitarian law regulates the methods and means of warfare and the treatment of people in times of war, including children. It applies only in times of armed conflict. It includes treaties as well as customary international humanitarian law.¹²

The four Geneva Conventions (1949) and The Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907) regulate how States and armed groups should behave in times of armed conflict. The Geneva Conventions also have two additional protocols:

- Additional Protocol I (1977) affords special protection to children in times of war and sets 15 years as the age limit for recruitment into armed forces.
- Additional Protocol II (1977) addresses rights of civilians (including children) in times of non-international armed conflict, such as civil wars, insurgencies, and other forms of internal armed conflict. Additional Protocol II also states that children under the age of fifteen shall neither be recruited nor allowed to participate in hostilities. Additional Protocol II is especially important nowadays since armed conflicts mostly fall into the category of internal (intrastate) conflict.

IHL provides protection to children in the following ways: ¹³			
Humanitarian aid	Medical care	Children separated from their families	
- Children are guaranteed access to the essentials of life including food, water, clothing, and shelter. - Parties to conflict are obliged to permit the free passage of all essential food-stuff and clothing intended for children. - Children should be given priority in the distribution of relief consignments.	- Children must receive priority during evacuations from besieged or encircled areas and be sheltered in hospitals and safety zones. - Children are allowed to be temporarily evacuated to neutral countries for medical reasons.	- IHL provides for the preservation of family unity. - Authorities must help to find out the identity of children who have been separated from their families including who their parents are. Parties to a conflict are obliged to keep members of the same family together if they are interned.	
Protection of children from combat	Protection of children in captivity	Exemption from death penalty	Education and culture
- The recruitment of children under the age of fifteen into armed forces is prohibited.¹⁴ - Child combatants under the age of fifteen are still entitled to the special protection provided to children under the Geneva Conventions.	- Children arrested, detained, or interned should be held in separate quarters from adults unless they remain with family members. - Interned children should be given additional food to meet physiological needs.	Children under the age of eighteen cannot be sentenced to the death penalty in relation to any crimes committed.	Children should be able to receive an education, and their culture and traditions should be respected.

TABLE 2: International humanitarian law: summary of key provisions protecting children

International Human Rights Law

International human rights law regulates the way in which States treat people under their jurisdiction. Its provisions are applicable both in times of peace and in times of armed conflict. Human rights law defines a 'child' as anyone who is younger than 18 years, unless adulthood is reached earlier under national law.¹⁵

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989), along with its Optional

Protocols, form a cornerstone of international human rights law concerning children. Under Article 34 of the CRC, States Parties must 'protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse'. Article 37 further specifies the protection of children from torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000) provides additional protection. The Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000) raises the minimum age for compulsory recruitment into armed forces to eighteen years and requires States to do everything they can to prevent individuals under the age of eighteen from participating in hostilities. It also prohibits the recruitment and use in hostilities of anyone under the age of eighteen by armed groups.

The International Labor Organization Convention 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (1999) identifies recruitment and use of anyone under the age of eighteen in armed conflict as one of the worst forms of child labor.

Children are also granted rights through other human rights conventions, such as:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966).
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).
- The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its Optional Protocol (1967).
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984).
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

International Criminal Law

International criminal law applies to individuals. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) specifically defines crimes against children.

Killing and maiming

In certain circumstances, the killing and maiming of children may constitute genocide, a crime against humanity and/or a war crime as provided in Articles 6, 7 and 8.

Recruitment and use

The recruitment or use of children in hostilities can also give rise to individual criminal responsibility. It is a war crime under the Statute of the International Criminal Court to conscript children under the age of 15 years into the national armed forces or armed groups, or to use them to participate actively in hostilities.¹⁶

Attacks on schools and hospitals

It is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (see Article 8 (2)b(ix) and 8(2)e(iv)), to intentionally direct attacks against buildings

dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, or against historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence

Rape and other forms of sexual violence constitute war crimes and, if it is being committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, a crime against humanity (Article 7 (1)g, 8(2)b(xxi and xxii) and 8(2)e(vi) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court).

Abduction

Enforced disappearances may amount to a crime against humanity as defined in Article 7 (2) (i) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, if they are committed for purposes otherwise prohibited (such as sexual slavery, use in armed forces).

Denial of humanitarian access

Article 8(2)b(xxv) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court notes, “Intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions,” may constitute a war crime. Although the war crime speaks of “starvation,” the commentaries state that there was agreement that it would not just be denial of food that could amount to starvation, but also of any other objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. Further, Article 8 (iii) of the Rome Statute of the ICC notes that, “Intentionally directing attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping mission in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, as long as they are entitled to the protection given to civilians or civilian objects under the international law of armed conflict,” may also constitute a war crime.

The Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations

The Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017) outlines the responsibilities of UN missions and their personnel regarding child protection. The policy applies to all personnel (military, police, and civilian).

United Nations peacekeeping operations with a mission-specific Security Council mandate on child protection usually have dedicated civilian child protection staff (national and international child protection advisers, officers, assistants, and UN Volunteers). In situations where dedicated child protection capacity is not present, the child protection lead in the mission (often the human rights component or, in some cases, a child protection focal point in another civilian component) will discard child protection tasks and responsibilities in coordination with the Child Protection Team in the UN Department of Peace Operations.

The following focuses on the key requirements specific to UN uniformed personnel.

Key requirements for UN military personnel:

- Military personnel should receive clear guidance on actions to take and avoid when protecting children. Child protection guidance should be integrated into strategic and operational documents, while mission-specific instructions should be issued regarding military actions involving children within the context of each specific mission.
- Military child protection focal points should be appointed at Force headquarters, Sector (Brigade), Battalion, Company, and sub-unit levels to coordinate child protection efforts. Military personnel should receive pre-deployment and in-mission training on child protection to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skills to recognize, report, and respond appropriately to child protection concerns in the mission area.
- Military personnel should inform parties to the conflict about the consequences of violations and abuses against children.

Key requirements for UN Police personnel:

- UN Police should integrate child protection into their work, including mentoring, advising, and capacity-building efforts in support of the host-State police and juvenile justice systems.
- Mission-specific guidance should be issued to inform UN Police actions in protecting children.
- Police child protection focal points should be appointed at mission headquarters and the Regional, Sector and team sites levels to coordinate with civilian child protection staff.
- Police personnel should receive training on international norms and standards concerning children's rights and apply them in their work.

International Guidelines

The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2007) provide a comprehensive framework for preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts and ensuring their release and reintegration into society. This guiding document supports efforts to protect children from involvement with armed forces and armed groups, and to facilitate their recovery and reintegration into civilian life. It places emphasis on addressing the specific needs of girls.

The Safe Schools Declaration (2015) and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict (2014) outline measures to enhance the protection of education from attacks and restrict the use of schools and universities for military purposes by armed forces and armed groups. They provide

guidance for military commanders, policy makers and educators to safeguard educational institutions and ensure the continuity of education during armed conflict.

The Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (2017) represent a comprehensive approach to integrating child protection in UN peacekeeping operations, focusing on the prevention of the recruitment and use of children. They emphasize the need for training and guidance for UN military personnel on how to identify, prevent and respond to the recruitment and use of children.

International guidelines and rules related to justice for children and aim to address the unique needs and rights of children who come into contact with the justice and other related systems, as victims, witnesses, alleged offenders or for other reasons. These guidelines aim to ensure that every child, irrespective of their circumstances, is served by the justice system in their best interest and in accordance with international norms and standards.

- The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (1985) (The Beijing Rules).¹⁷
- The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (1990) (The Tokyo Rules).¹⁸
- The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (1990) (The Riyadh Guidelines).¹⁹
- The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (1990) (The Havana Rules).²⁰
- The Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System (1997) (The Vienna Guidelines).²¹
- The Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (2005).²²

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 2, Lesson 1: Legal framework, and Lesson 2: Child protection framework, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>
- Original UN Security Council resolutions on UN peacekeeping mission mandates and reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council are accessible using the Official Document System: <https://documents.un.org/>. Alternatively, these documents can be accessed through the UN Security Council website. For UN Security Council resolutions: <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/resolutions-0> for reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council: <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/reports-secretary-general>.

- UN Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, and reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict are also accessible via the website of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/virtual-library/>.
- Official peacekeeping guidance documents and training materials for UN uniformed components are accessible through the Peacekeeping Resource Hub: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training>
 - Core Pre-deployment Training Materials (2025)
 - Specialized Training Materials for United Nations Police Officers (2021)
 - Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023)
 - Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023)
- General comments adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in particular General Comments No 5, 10, 12, 14 and 24 available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/general-comments>.
- For a comprehensive overview of relevant international legal references and international standards on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, see Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Field Manual (2014), Annex 2, available at: https://www.mrmtools.org/files/MRM_Field_Manual_Annexes.pdf.

EXERCISES

Understanding the child protection mandate in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations and the legal framework and relevant international guidelines that protect children in armed conflict is a key responsibility UN uniformed personnel. The exercise accompanying Chapter 1 of the handbook focuses on identifying and analyzing the child protection mandate in a specific UN peacekeeping operation.



EXERCISE 1.1:

Reviewing the Child Protection Mandate of a United Nations Peacekeeping Operation

Instructions

- Access Security Council Resolution 2759 (2024), which extended the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 November 2025, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4066645?v=pdf&ln=en>.
- Examine the resolution to understand the mission's child protection mandate.

Specifically:

- Identify sections that detail the mission’s overall objectives and references to child protection, specifically mentions of grave violations, exploitation, and/or violence against children.
 - Identify child protection responsibilities/tasks assigned to the mission, such as monitoring, reporting, and supporting the release and reintegration of children.
 - Identify how child protection tasks are to be implemented, such as the deployment of advisers or collaboration with local and international partners.
 - Examine the roles of various mission components and how they should coordinate with partners and host-State authorities
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Mandate overview:

Identify sections that detail the mission’s overall objectives and references to child protection, specifically mentions of grave violations, exploitation, and/or violence against children.

The resolution ‘urges all parties to armed conflict in the CAR, particularly armed groups, to end all violations and abuses committed against children’ including those involving ‘recruitment and use, rape and sexual violence, killing and maiming, abductions and attacks on schools and hospitals’.

It also emphasizes the ‘full implementation of action plans signed by armed groups’ and welcomes the ‘adoption of the child protection code’ underlining the importance of its ‘full implementation’.

Specific provisions:

Identify child protection responsibilities/tasks assigned to the mission, such as monitoring, reporting, and supporting the release and reintegration of children.

The resolution ‘requests MINUSCA to take fully into account child protection as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate’ including responsibilities to ‘monitor and report on grave violations’, ensure the ‘release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups’, and protect ‘educational facilities’.

Operational strategies:

Identify how child protection tasks are to be implemented, such as the deployment of advisers or collaboration with local and international partners.

The resolution calls for **'the deployment of protection advisers, child protection advisers, women protection advisers and civilian and uniformed gender advisers and focal points'** as part of its child protection strategy.

It also stresses the importance of adopting a **'gender-sensitive, survivor-centered approach'** to assist victims of sexual violence.

Roles and responsibilities:

Examine the roles of various mission components and how they should coordinate with partners and host-State authorities.

The resolution details the role of **'Child Protection Advisers'** within the mission, with **'specific protection and assistance for women and children'** being a priority.

It also specifies **'coordination with local and international partners'** and engagement with **'the CAR Government'** in the implementation of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) and security sector reform (SSR) processes, ensuring child protection considerations are integrated throughout these efforts.

CHAPTER 2

Operationalizing the Child Protection Mandate within the Military and Police Components

Once expectations of the UN Security Council regarding the protection of children are clearly defined in the mandate of the UN peacekeeping operation, it is crucial to ensure that child protection priorities and considerations are integrated into all military and police operations at both the operational and tactical levels. To achieve this, UN military and police personnel should:

- **Operationalize child protection within the military branches at Force headquarters, Sector (Brigade) headquarters, Battalion headquarters, Company headquarters, and sub-unit level.**
- **Operationalize child protection within the UN Police headquarters, and the Regional, Sector and Team Site levels.**
- **Understand the responsibilities of the military child protection focal points at Force headquarters, at the Sector (Brigade) headquarters, Battalion headquarters, Company headquarters, and sub-unit level.**
- **Understand the responsibilities of the UN Police child protection focal points at UN Police headquarters, and the Regional, Sector and Team Site levels.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

MAINSTREAMING AND INTEGRATING CHILD PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS IN THE WORK OF THE MILITARY AND POLICE COMPONENTS

The mission mandate is operationalized through various strategic and operational documents.²³ These documents provide clear direction for the military and police components, aiming at ensuring child protection considerations are consistently integrated at all levels of planning.

- **Mission Concept and Mission Plan:** These documents provide strategic guidance on how to achieve the mission's objectives. Child protection considerations should be incorporated into the mission plan as cross-cutting strategies to align with the broader mission mandate.
- **Concept of operations (CONOPS) and operational plans (OPLAN) for uniformed components:** The CONOPS for both military and police components define the strategic approach to fulfilling the mission mandate, including child protection objectives. The OPLAN elaborates on this by detailing specific actions, resources, and coordination needed to integrate child protection into military operations, and law enforcement and policing activities, respectively.
- **Directives from the Force Commander and Police Commissioner:** The Force Commander and Police Commissioner issue mission-specific guidance on integrating child protection into military and police activities. This guidance ensures alignment with the mission's child protection goals and is usually

provided through a Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection and a Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection.²⁴

- **Tactical Orders and Guidance:** Tactical commanders in the military and police components issue orders to subordinate units that integrate child protection considerations into their respective activities. These orders align with the Force Commander's and Police Commissioner's Directives on Child Protection and other mission-specific child protection guidance, ensuring that child protection.

THE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS NETWORK WITHIN THE MILITARY AND POLICE COMPONENTS

To achieve a coordinated and effective implementation of child protection responsibilities assigned to military and police peacekeeping personnel, the Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017) tasks Force Commanders and Police Commissioners with establishing a network of child protection focal points (CPFPPs)²⁵ within the military and the police components.²⁶

Force Commanders and Police Commissioners are directly responsible for appointing focal points at Force headquarters and UN Police headquarters.

In the military component, commanders are responsible for ensuring that CPFPPs are appointed at every level of the chain of command, including Sector (Brigade) headquarters, Battalion headquarters, Company headquarters, and sub-unit level.

Within the police component, CPFPPs must be similarly appointed at every level of the UN Police chain of command, including UN Police headquarters, Regional, Sector, and team site levels. UN Police personnel should be appointed to serve as CPFPPs considering their specific capabilities, specialized skills, and experience, in line with the UN Police component's mission-specific standard operating procedures governing UN Police assignments.

The primary responsibility of military and police child protection focal points is to ensure that child protection priorities and considerations are integrated into all military operations or police activities, in collaboration with the relevant actors, in particular civilian child protection staff in the mission.²⁷

All military and police personnel should be informed of who the designated military and police CPFPPs are upon their arrival in the mission area. It is essential that they familiarize themselves with the CPFPPs in their areas of deployment, as these focal points are key contacts for addressing child protection concerns. Personnel can seek guidance on child protection matters from CPFPPs as needed.

UN uniformed personnel, in particular military and police CPFPPs, should also be aware that there might be in the mission military and police focal points for conflict-related sexual violence, gender, human rights, and the protection of civilians, among others. In some instances, the military and police CPFPPs might be called upon to also serve as focal points for some of these topics. While these arrangements might differ from mission to mission, from a location to another within the mission area, and they might evolve over time, it is important that all military and police personnel be informed about the existence of these focal points arrangements upon their arrival in the mission area.

The United Nations Military Child Protection Focal Points Network

Tasks of the Force Headquarters Child Protection Focal Point

The tasks of the Force headquarters child protection focal point (FHQ CPFP) can be divided into the following principal areas.²⁸

Advisory role	One of the primary responsibilities of the FHQ CPFP is to advise the Force Commander, senior military leadership and FHQ staff on: ■ Supporting the integration of child protection considerations into the CONOPS, orders, and guidance issued on behalf of the Force Commander, in coordination with relevant staff officers at FHQ. This includes the Force Commander’s Directive on Child Protection. ■ Contributing to the incorporation of child protection considerations into the planning and conduct of military operations (for example, by actively participating in the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP)²⁹ alongside other military staff) to ensure measures to mitigate harm to children are considered before, during, and after an operation. The FHQ CPFP also provides guidance and support to the Sector (Brigade) headquarters (HQ) child protection focal points, Battalion HQ child protection focal points, Company HQ child protection focal points, and sub-units child protection focal points through regular briefings, meetings, and discussions.
Information-sharing responsibilities	The FHQ CPFP is responsible for sharing information received on alleged grave violations against children and other child protection concerns through the chain of command and the Child Protection Section/Unit. This includes: ■ Support monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children by civilian child protection staff by sharing information for verification and follow up. ■ Contribute to the mission’s efforts to establish and maintain an effective child protection alert system, with the support of the Child Protection Section/Unit. This facilitates the rapid and accurate exchange of information on alleged grave violations against children and other child protection concerns between the Force and civilian child protection staff, using established information-sharing and reporting channels.³⁰ It also involves ensuring initial reports of threats to children, including those identified through early warning indicators, are received and channeled to relevant military counterparts at the Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) and the Joint Operation Centre (JOC) through mission-wide platforms.³¹ This enables prompt responses and opportunities for pre-emptive action by the mission.

Collaboration with other stakeholders in the mission	The FHQ CPFP collaborates with many stakeholders to identify how the military component can support the implementation of the child protection mandate. In this regard, the role of the FHQ CPFP includes: ■ Acting as the point of contact with relevant staff officers at FHQ such as the Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Branch (U-2), Operations Branch (U-3), Plans and Policy Branch (U-5), Military Training Branch (U-7) and UN Civil-Military Coordination Branch (U-9). ■ Serving as the point of contact to the mission's Senior Child Protection Adviser and other civilian child protection staff. ■ Coordinating activities with mission personnel responsible for the implementation of other protection mandates (protection of civilians³², conflict-related sexual violence³³ and human rights³⁴).
Development and implementation of mission-level guidance	The FHQ CPFP, in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit, supports the development and/or updating of the Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection. The FHQ CPFP, under the authority of the Force Commander, is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection. This involves: ■ Systematically monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Directive, documenting good practices and lessons learned in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit and the mission's Policy and Best Practices Officer. ■ Regularly evaluating and reviewing the Directive to assess its effectiveness, identifying any challenges or gaps in implementation, and formulating recommendations to address these issues. The FHQ CPFP can also be called upon to support the development and/or implementation of other relevant mission-level guidance (for example, standard operating procedures) on military conduct when responding to grave violations against children, the military use of schools, appropriate conduct during interactions with children in the mission area, or handover of children associated with armed forces and armed groups. The FHQ CPFP should be familiar with related DPO guidance (e.g., the Standard Operating Procedure on the Handling of Detention in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions (2020), including its annex B on special considerations for children).
Training	The FHQ CPFP monitors and supports the delivery of continuous and mission-specific training on child protection for all UN military personnel, in close coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit.

TABLE 3: Tasks of the Force headquarters child protection focal point

Tasks of the Sector (Brigade) Headquarters Military Child Protection Focal Points

The tasks of military child protection focal points at the Sector (Brigade) headquarters can be divided into the following areas.

Advisory role	Advise the Sector (Brigade) commander, Sector headquarters (SHQ) (Brigade headquarters (BHQ)) staff and commanders on all child protection issues within the sector's area of responsibility, in collaboration with the civilian Child Protection Section/Unit.
Liaison	Function as the liaison between the SHQ (BHQ) and the civilian child protection staff at the field office.
Training	Follow up on the training of military CPFs to ensure the implementation of child protection measures at the tactical levels, including Battalion and Company levels.
Support information-sharing	Inform the Child Protection Section/Unit of any child protection concerns, including alleged grave violations against children observed using the established information-sharing and reporting channel.
Referrals	Ensure military CPFs within the area of responsibility are well-informed about referral processes to help address the needs of children through established referral mechanisms obtained from the Child Protection Section/Unit.
Compliance	Ensure the Force within the area of responsibility complies with the Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection.

TABLE 4: Tasks of the Sector (Brigade) headquarters military child protection focal points

Tasks of the Battalion Headquarters, Company Headquarters, and Sub-unit Military Child Protection Focal Points³⁵

The tasks of military child protection focal points at the Battalion headquarters, Company headquarters and sub-unit can be divided into the following areas.

Advisory role	Advise the battalion commander on all child protection issues within the Battalion's area of responsibility.
Liaison and coordination	Serve as the liaison between the Battalion/sub-unit, the civilian child protection staff, and other child protection actors, and coordinate closely with military CPFs at SHQ (BHQ) and FHQ to ensure aligned efforts in child protection.

Developing guidelines and procedures	In close consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit and other relevant mission components, develop guidance for the Battalion on children's issues, for example, appropriate conduct during interactions with children, including prevention of child labor by the mission and its personnel. Develop and support the implementation of standard operating procedures for the handover of children associated with armed forces and armed groups captured or who surrender, in close consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit and in compliance with existing relevant DPO guidance.
Support information-sharing	Inform the Child Protection Section/Unit of any child protection concerns, including alleged grave violations against children observed using the established information-sharing and reporting channel.
Compliance	Ensure the Battalion HQ and sub-units comply with the Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection.

TABLE 5: Tasks of the Battalion headquarters, Company headquarters, and Sub-unit military child protection focal points

Integration of Child Protection within Military Branches

Integrating child protection across military staff functions is crucial for ensuring UN peacekeeping missions effectively address the needs and vulnerabilities of children in armed conflict. The FHQ CPFP plays a key role in this regard, including by coordinating with staff officers across all military branches. These branches are central to planning and executing all UN military activities and operations, making it essential to apply a child protection perspective in their work.

The FHQ CPFP should be well-versed in the activities of all staff functions and work collaboratively with them to ensure that child protection considerations are integrated.

Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Branch (U/G/S-2)³⁶

The Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Branch, formerly the Military Information Staff Branch (U/G/S-2) is responsible for analyzing the operational environment and identifying threats to civilians, including those posed by host-State security forces, armed groups, or other alleged perpetrators. Peacekeeping-Intelligence-led planning requires a thorough analysis of specific risks to children in the area of operations. Therefore, it is important for the FHQ CPFP to work closely with the U/G/S-2 to ensure that child-specific information is incorporated into the Information Acquisition Plan. Specifically, the military CPFPs, in collaboration with the U/G/S-2 and the Child Protection Section/Unit, should ensure that the military component:

- Identifies violations against children in daily reports and analyses aiming to highlight the differences in the ways girls and boys are respectively exposed and subjected to conflict-related violations and the different outcome for each.
- To the extent possible, ensure that reports contain data disaggregated by sex and age.
- Identifies alleged perpetrators, where applicable.
- Provides early warning of risks of grave violations against children highlighting, when possible, different risks for boys and girls to the FHQ CPFP.
- Maintains ongoing gender-sensitive analysis, with support from the FHQ CPFP and the Child Protection Section/Unit, of prevailing threats to children, boys and girls, in the area of responsibility.
- In consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit, produces and regularly updates risk analysis regarding grave violations against children in the area of responsibility to inform planning and operations.

Operations Branch (U/G/S-3) and Plans and Policy Branch (U/G/S-5)

The Military Operations Branch (U/G/S-3) manages current operations and force deployment, whereas the Military Planning Branch (U/G/S-5) focuses on longer term planning. During operational planning, it is essential to assess the potential different risks that children, boys and girls, may face during military operations and develop appropriate contingency plans (CONPLANS) to mitigate these risks. Some scenarios to consider include situations where children may:

- Be directly harmed by military activities.
- Be used by armed forces or armed groups as spies and collaborators.
- Be coerced into participating in acts of violence.
- Be apprehended or detained by UN military personnel.³⁷
- Become panicked and separated from their caregivers, becoming more vulnerable to violations and abuses.
- Actively seek protection from UN military personnel.³⁸
- Engage in opposition to UN peacekeeping operations (e.g., stone-throwing).
- May be at risk of or were subjected to violence and physical harm.

Incorporating these scenarios into CONPLANS involves addressing both specific risks to children and planning for force disposition to ensure their safety in the area of operations. This includes incorporating specific early warning indicators into the planning process to anticipate threats and implement risk mitigation strategies.

Logistics Branch (U/G/S-4)

The Military Logistics Branch (U/G/S-4), in collaboration with Mission Support, is responsible for planning, coordinating, and facilitating logistics support to ensure that units are able to respond to the needs of children. This may include supporting the establishment of holding facilities for children at Battalion bases.³⁹

Medical Section

The Military Medical Branch should develop CONPLANS that prioritize the treatment of injured children and ensure prompt medical evacuation (MEDEVAC). These plans should also include medical assistance for children involved in hostilities or affected as collateral damage. When feasible, medical assistance should be provided by personnel of different genders and children should be allowed to choose the gender of the medical personnel to interact with.

Information Operations Cell

The Military Information Operations Cell coordinates communication and engagement activities to gain and maintain community support and create a secure environment. In coordination with military CPFs, the Information Operations Cell should support activities aimed at influencing and encouraging targeted audiences to end and prevent grave violations against children. This includes key leadership engagements, distributing child protection leaflets, and disseminating child protection messages through radio, text messages, social media, and other media platforms in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit.

Military Training Branch (U/G/S-7)

The Military Training Branch (U/G/S-7) is responsible for induction training, in-mission training, identifying the training needs, and supporting the delivery of training to the military component. In coordination with the Training Branch and the Child Protection Section/Unit, the military CPFs should aim to ensure that UN military personnel receive both induction and continuous training on child protection. This training should be based on the Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023) and tailored to the mission context whenever possible.

UN Civil-Military Coordination Branch (U/G/S-9)

Civil-military coordination activities must adhere to the 'do no harm' principle, emphasizing the necessity to avoid actions that could potentially cause harm or exacerbate the vulnerability of children. This requires thorough consideration of any potential negative impact on children that may arise from civil-military activities. CONPLANS should be developed to address these risks. Quick impact projects undertaken by the military component should, whenever possible, consider specific child protection development initiatives.

The United Nations Police Child Protection Focal Points Network

Tasks of the Police Headquarters Child Protection Focal Point

The tasks of the UN Police headquarters child protection focal point (PHQ CPFP) can be divided into the following principal areas.

Advisory responsibilities	The PHQ CPFP in coordination with the Senior Child Protection Adviser and the Child Protection Section/Unit advises the Police Commissioner and other United Nations Police (UNPOL) personnel on: ■ Integrating child protection into the annual work plan of the UN Police Component, as guided by the CONOPS, in coordination with the mission police planner. ■ Integrating child protection considerations into police planning documents, particularly the operational plan (OPLAN) and related operational orders (OPORDs), as well as management and budgeting. ■ Developing and/or updating and implementing the Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection. The PHQ CPFP also provides guidance and support to UN Police CPFPs based at Regional, Sector and Team Sites through regular briefings, meetings, and discussions.
Information-sharing responsibilities	The PHQ CPFP is responsible for sharing information received on alleged grave violations against children and other child protection concerns with the relevant stakeholders in the mission. This includes: ■ Support monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children by civilian child protection staff by sharing information for verification and follow-up. ■ Ensuring the rapid and accurate exchange of information on alleged grave violations against children, and other child protection concerns between police CPFPs and the Child Protection Section/Unit, following the chain of command. ■ Receiving and channeling initial reports of threats to children, including those identified through early warning indicators, to relevant police counterparts in the JMAC and in the JOC through the mission-wide central situational awareness database.⁴⁰ ■ Ensuring that all efforts made on child protection are accurately reflected in the reports submitted to the Police Division at UN headquarters. Data on grave violations against children shall not be included in reports, as such data are submitted through separate established channels, unless this is agreed upon with the mission's Senior Child Protection Adviser and Child Protection Section/Unit which, in that case, shall provide the data.⁴¹

Collaboration with other stakeholders in the mission	The PHQ CPFPP collaborates with various mission actors to identify how the UN Police component can support the implementation of the child protection mandate. In this regard, the role of the PHQ CPFPP includes: ■ Acting as the point of contact with relevant stakeholders within the police component, such as the police focal points in the JMAC and in the JOC. ■ Coordinating with the Police Human Resources Management Unit on the appointment of police CPFPPs from the deployed personnel in sectors and team sites, based on operational requirements. ■ Serving as the entry point for coordination arrangements between the UN Police component and the Child Protection Section/Unit. ■ Facilitating civilian child protection staff liaison with host-State police authorities, including for the purposes of monitoring activities, verifying grave violations against children, delivering child protection training, accessing detention centers where children might be detained, and following up on disciplinary and accountability procedures against those accused of violations among the host-State police. ■ Coordinating activities with mission personnel working on protection issues (protection of civilians, conflict-related sexual violence, and human rights), and other mission and external partners. ■ Liaising with the Protection Cluster and Sub-Cluster on child protection.
Support knowledge management on child protection	The PHQ CPFPP is responsible for collecting best practices and managing knowledge on child protection in collaboration with other mission actors. This includes: ■ Ensuring that UN Police CPFPPs at the Regional, Sector and Team Sites are informed of any updates to child protection-specific documents or decisions. ■ Coordinating with the UN Police Policy and Best Practices Officer/focal point (PBPO), the Police Internal Evaluation Unit (IEU), and the mission's civilian Policy and Best Practices Officer to utilize available knowledge-sharing tools and disseminate trends, good practices, and lessons learned on child protection. ■ Drafting an end-of-assignment report or handover note, including recommendations for improvement.

TABLE 6: Tasks of the Police headquarters child protection focal point

Tasks of the Regional, Sector and Team Sites Police Child Protection Focal Points

The tasks of UN Police child protection focal points at the Regional, Sector and Team Site level can be divided into the following main areas.

Advisory role	Brief police field units, team sites, and Formed Police Units (FPUs) about child protection issues.
Liaison	Maintain regular communication with the PHQ CPFP and civilian child protection staff within the area of responsibility. Collaborate with host-State police on child protection initiatives, including for facilitating access to detention facilities for civilian child protection staff.
Training	In consultation with the PHQ CPFP, assist in organizing and delivering training on child protection for host-State police officers.
Support information-sharing	Gather and report threats, grave violations against children, and other relevant child protection concerns to the PHQ CPFP and civilian child protection staff, following the chain of command.
Referrals	Facilitate the referral of children victims of grave violations to civilian child protection staff for necessary follow-up and support.
Compliance	Ensure UN Police personnel comply with the Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection.

TABLE 7: Tasks of the Regional, Sector and Team Sites police child protection focal points

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY AND POLICE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

To be fully prepared for the responsibilities as a uniformed CPFP in supporting the implementation of the mission's child protection mandate, it is important to:

- ✔ Review the latest mission mandate and identify the child protection provisions.
- ✔ Become familiar with the Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017).
- ✔ Become familiar with the international legal and normative framework on child protection. Police CPFPs should also locate the relevant national legislation related to child protection.
- ✔ Read the following latest reports to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of conflict on children in the mission context: the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, the report of the Secretary-General on a country-specific mission to the Security Council, and (if available) the country-specific report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict to the Security Council.
- ✔ Review the terms of reference for the military or police child protection focal points.



Kashebere, North Kivu Province, DR Congo: At the gate of the MONUSCO Temporary Operational Base in Kashebere, a hotline is available to the population to alert MONUSCO contingents in case of attacks by armed groups. Photo MONUSCO/Alain Wandimoyi

- ✔ Study the mission's latest Force Commander's or Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection.
- ✔ Identify and familiarize yourself with all existing directions and guidance related to child protection within the mission.
- ✔ Examine the mission's Protection of Civilians strategy and Child Protection mainstreaming plan, where available.
- ✔ Upon assignment to serve as the CFPF, schedule a detailed briefing with the Senior Child Protection Adviser and/or civilian child protection staff to understand the main child protection issues.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Checklist: Developing, revising, and implementing the Force Commander's or the Police Commissioner's Directive on child protection

In line with their command-and-control responsibilities in UN peacekeeping operations, the Force Commander and Police Commissioner exercise operational control over all military and police personnel in the mission, respectively. They have the authority to direct forces to accomplish specific missions or tasks. The Force Commander and Police Commissioner are empowered to issue guidance on matters crucial to the mission's success, including the protection of children.

Sample templates for the Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection and of the Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection are available to be used as a guide.⁴² These templates are designed for missions with a sizeable military and police presence, an explicit child protection mandate, and dedicated child protection capacity.⁴³ The directives apply to all military and police peacekeeping personnel, and compliance is mandatory.

The FHQ CPFP and the PHQ CPFP play a vital role in developing and refining the Directives, ensuring they are comprehensive and actionable. They also ensure these Directives are regularly disseminated, evaluated, and updated. Use the following checklist as a guide.

As the FHQ or PHQ child protection focal point, there are critical aspects to consider when developing, revising, and implementing the Directives on Child Protection. Use this checklist to guide the process.



1. Initial Review

Before developing or revising the directive, read the latest mission mandate, identify the child protection concerns, and review the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, including the annexes listing parties to the conflict responsible for grave violations. This will help ensure that the directive takes into account and address the latest developments and concerns.



2. Involvement of Leadership

The Force Commander and Police Commissioner should be actively involved in the preparation of the directive and must sign the final version. The involvement of the leadership is essential to ensure the buy in of military and police personnel at all levels.



3. Coordination with Mission Child Protection Section/Unit

Develop, revise, and implement the directive in close coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit.



4. Contextual Relevance

The directive must be informed by the contextual realities of the mission area, and unique risks children face in the operational environment. This will ensure that the directive factors in and addresses issues that are specific to the mission setting.



5. Comprehensive Coverage

Ensure the directive is comprehensive, addressing all key child protection issues applicable in the mission area, such as grave violations against children, child exploitation and child labor.



6. Alignment with Policies and Strategies

The directive should be grounded in the Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017) that explicitly tasks Force Commanders with issuing mission-level guidance on child protection, other relevant policies, the mission's POC strategy, child protection mainstreaming plan, and CRSV mainstreaming plan, if applicable, and existing Force/Police standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines on child protection. This will help ensure the coherence and consistency of interventions.



7. Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

Directions must be clear about child protection roles and responsibilities at each command level.



8. Defined Reporting and Coordination

Clearly define reporting and coordination roles within the child protection alert system, specifying who reports to whom and from whom to seek support/advice.



9. Specified Procedures

Clarify child protection procedures, such as on the handover to civilian actors of children associated with armed forces and armed groups arrested or detained by or those captured or who surrendered to the mission, protection of schools or hospitals, interacting with children, and referral mechanisms to address the needs of children requiring assistance and appropriate services.



10. Identification of Points of Contact

Identify the relevant points of contact, such as the FHQ CPFP, military CPFPs, and Senior CPA for the Force Commander's Directive, and the PHQ CPFP, UN Police CPFPs and Senior CPA for Police Commissioner's Directive.



11. Dissemination

Disseminate the FC's Directive to all staff at FHQ, and to commanders and military CPFPs at Sector (Brigade) HQ and sub-unit levels for the military. Disseminate the PC's Directive to all staff at UN Police HQ, to commanders and police CPFPs at Regional, Sector, and sub-sector levels, and to FPU commanders. Relevant civilian components, as determined by the mission, should also receive a copy of the FC's and PC's Directives. Dissemination should be repeated on a regular basis to account for staff/contingent rotations.

☐	12. Consultation Share the draft FC's Directive with the Office of Military Affairs (OMA) and the DPO Child Protection Team at UN headquarters. Share the draft PC's Directive with the Police Division (PD) and the DPO Child Protection Team at UN headquarters.
☐	13. Monitoring and Compliance Regularly monitor the compliance with the directive and take corrective actions as required, under the authority of the FC or PC.

TABLE 8: Checklist: Developing, revising, and implementing the Force Commander's or the Police Commissioner's Directive on child protection

B. Checklist: Designing and delivering in-mission training on child protection for United Nations military and police personnel

Upon deployment to a UN peacekeeping operation, all UN military and police personnel will receive in-mission induction briefings. The FHQ CPFP and PHQ CPFP should support civilian child protection staff and the Integrated Mission Training Centre to ensure that child protection is thoroughly integrated into these briefings. Additionally, ongoing child protection training is essential throughout the duty assignment to equip UN military and police personnel with the skills to recognize, report, and respond appropriately to child protection concerns in the mission area. Regular training activities should be scheduled to accommodate the frequent rotation of uniformed personnel to ensure consistent and comprehensive child protection awareness and response.

For UN military personnel, the civilian child protection staff will deliver the child protection training, in collaboration with the FHQ CPFP.

Key aspects to consider		Checklist
1	Use existing training materials on child protection developed by DPO	☐ Use the Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023) or the Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023) as the basis for the content. These training packages are primarily designed for pre-deployment training but can be used for in-mission training as well. They are available in multiple languages: ☐ https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military ☐ https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police
2	Contextualize the content to the mission	☐ Utilize mission-specific directives, SOPs, and guidelines, e.g., the Force Commander's or Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection of the mission.

Key aspects to consider		Checklist
2	Contextualize the content to the mission	☐ When applicable, discuss the linkages with other protection mandates the mission might have (e.g., CRSV, human rights, POC) and related training.
	<i>Address mission-specific challenges</i>	☐ Identify and discuss unique challenges related to child protection in the mission area, such as recruitment and use of children, attacks on schools, arrest and detention of children for actual or alleged association with armed groups, etc. ☐ Analyze past incidents involving UN military and police action related to child protection to identify common challenges and areas for improvement.
	<i>Use mission-area data</i>	☐ Present data on child protection issues specific to the mission area, such as on grave violations against children. Always refer to official data on grave violations that can be obtained from the Child Protection Section/Unit.
	<i>Scenario-based learning with local relevance</i>	☐ Develop scenarios based on actual cases or potential situations in the mission area for role-playing and problem-solving exercises in collaboration with the Child Protection Section/Unit. Consider utilizing existing exercises from the Reinforcement Training Packages, which already include relevant scenarios and decision-making exercises. ☐ Include decision-making exercises that reflect the complexities and dilemmas faced in the mission area.
	<i>Adapt training to local cultural context</i>	☐ Incorporate cultural norms, practices, and beliefs that may impact child protection efforts. Include training on effective communication with local communities and authorities respecting their cultural and social context.
	<i>Highlight cooperation with host-State authorities and other child protection partners present</i>	☐ Outline procedures for coordinating with host-State law enforcement, social services, and child protection actors. ☐ Discuss protocols for referral and handover of children to host-State authorities and other child protection partners present in the mission area. ☐ Highlight partnerships with local organizations that provide support and services to children.

Key aspects to consider		Checklist
2	National legal framework (for UN Police training especially)	☐ Provide an overview of the national legal framework regarding child protection, including relevant laws, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms.
	Incorporate local stakeholders and experts	☐ Invite child protection experts, non-governmental organizations, and community leaders to share insights and experiences. Given the possible implications for those concerned, always consult with the Child Protection Section/Unit about the relevance and opportunity of external participation.
3	Ensure interactive and engaging training methods	☐ Include case studies, role-playing exercises, and group discussions to enhance understanding and retention.
		☐ Conduct scenario-based simulations to practice real-life application of child protection SOPs.
4	Incorporate feedback mechanisms	☐ Collect feedback from participants to continuously improve the training content and delivery.
		☐ Implement post-training assessments to measure understanding and effectiveness.
5	Ensure continuous learning & updates	☐ Provide access to additional resources, such as online courses and reference materials.
6	Monitor and evaluate training outcomes	☐ Track the progress and impact of the training sessions through regular evaluations.
		☐ Adjust the training program based on findings and emerging needs in the mission area.
7	Be realistic, collaborate and be creative	☐ Consider one's capacity, skills and knowledge, and availability when designing training.
		☐ Reach out and collaborate with others who have expertise in child protection and training delivery, including the Integrated Mission Training Centre and the Child Protection Section/Unit.
		☐ Leverage existing training materials as much as possible to maintain coherence and consistency and minimize your workload by adapting rather than reinventing resources.
		☐ Consider creative approaches to delivering training by leveraging different means (e.g., breaking a training programme into manageable weekly sessions via Microsoft Teams to increase accessibility and engagement across various locations).

TABLE 9: Checklist: Designing and delivering in-mission training on child protection for United Nations military and police personnel

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 3, Lesson 4: Force headquarters child protection focal point, and Lesson 5: Military child protection focal points in sectors, units and team sites, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>.
- Specialized Training Materials for United Nations Police Officers (2021), Lesson 2: Police command in a UN context, and Lesson 3: Introduction to UNPOL administration, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/stm/unpol>
- 2023.03 Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations.pdf. [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf).



This formed police unit from Bangladesh, composed of 80 women and 44 men, is serving as part of MONUSCO in the DR Congo. They are based in the capital city, Kinshasa, where they conduct simple as well as security patrols. Photo: MONUSCO/Myriam Asmani

EXERCISES

United Nations military and police personnel contribute to integrating child protection considerations in their daily work. The exercises accompanying Chapter 2 of the handbook focus on understanding the roles of UN military and police child protection focal points (CPFPs), and the importance of collaboration and coordination within each uniformed component to ensure child protection is effectively mainstreamed.



EXERCISE 2.1:

Integrating Child Protection in Military Operations: Role of Military Branches

Instructions

- Using the scenario provided below, outline the actions required by the relevant military branches, in close coordination with the Force headquarters (FHQ) child protection focal point (CPFP), to ensure that child protection considerations are integrated across the planning, coordination and execution of military operations. Consider the roles of:
 - ▶ The Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Branch.
 - ▶ The Operations Branch.
 - ▶ The Plans and Policy Branch.
 - ▶ The Logistics Branch.
 - ▶ The Medical Section.
 - ▶ The UN Civil-Military Coordination Branch.
- Once you have completed the exercise, compare your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario

In a conflict-affected region, a United Nations peacekeeping operation is deployed to stabilize the area, protect civilians, and disarm armed groups. Reports indicate that an armed group is actively recruiting children in Village A and committing other grave violations, including abduction and attacks on schools. The mission plans a military operation to disarm the armed group in Village A. Logistics support is required to prepare the mission to temporarily handle children who might be captured or surrender, and to equip patrols to provide emergency assistance. There is also a need to plan to address the immediate medical needs that might arise from the military operation, including casualty evacuation (CASEVAC). A quick impact project (QIP) is being planned to support Village A after the operation, including repairing schools.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Branch (U/G/S-2)

Objective: Identify threats to children and provide timely early warnings to inform operational planning.

Task: The FHQ CPFP coordinates with U2 and the Child Protection Section/Unit⁴⁴ to identify patterns of grave violations, including their gender dimensions, identify alleged perpetrators, assess risks and provide early warnings of risks to children to inform operational planning.

Possible actions (examples):

1. U2 analyses information from various sources (e.g., Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC), Joint Operations Centre (JOC), UN Police, military patrols, and other relevant UN mission components) to identify patterns of grave violations against children.
2. In collaboration with the FHQ CPFP and the Child Protection Section/Unit, U2 identifies high-risk areas, trends in violations, and alleged perpetrators.
3. U2 collaborates with the FHQ CPFP to ensure timely updates on emerging threats to children and disseminates early warnings regarding grave violations to U3, U5 and other relevant branches for incorporation into operational and contingency planning.

Operations Branch (U/G/S-3) and Plans and Policy Branch (U/G/S-5)

Objective: Integrate child protection considerations into operational planning and execution of military operations.

Task: The FHQ CPFP collaborates with U3 and U5 to integrate child protection measures into the operational plan, including developing contingency plans (CONPLANS) to mitigate risks to children.

Possible actions (examples):

1. U3 executes the operational plan by analyzing the plans components, tasks, and responsibilities. U3 will ensure that the plan is operationalized by informing and tasking unit, section or other commanders, making sure that the plan is understood and coordinated across all units and formations participating in the operation. U3 will oversee the operation, ensuring that the plan is being followed, and that adjustments and corrections are made, when necessary. In this scenario, U3 can emphasize the child protection elements of the plan, ensure that military personnel practice encountering children and rehearse critical phases of the operation identified by U2. As the operation unfolds in the village, U3 will constantly monitor developments and coordinate the effort ensuring that child protection measures are being followed.

2. U5 develops and ensures integration of the operational plan with all relevant stakeholders. This includes necessary child protections considerations. A key element in the development of the operational plan (OPLAN) is the analysis and overview of the operational environment from U2. In this scenario, U5 can include directives to ensure that troops understand procedures for identifying and safely handling children associated with the armed group, incorporate relevant provisions of international humanitarian law to prevent and respond to grave violations and coordination mechanisms with U4, medical sections, U9 and other relevant partners. Orders could include amendments to the Rules of Engagement, specific referral mechanisms for children encountered, and other actions to support the disarmament of the armed group while ensuring the maximum protection for children.
3. The FHQ CPFP works closely with U3 and U5 to identify specific risks to children, such as harm from military activities or separation from parents/ caregivers, ensuring these concerns are mitigated in the operational and contingency plans.

Logistics Branch (U/G/S-4)

Objective: Ensure logistic support for child protection.

Task: The FHQ CPFP advises U4 on logistic needs to meet child protection requirements, including safe facilities and appropriate resources for emergency response.

Possible actions (examples):

1. U4 coordinates with Mission Support to request necessary resources, for example resources required to ensure that, when establishing holding facilities, children can always be separated from adults and that girls can be separated from boys, as well as emergency medical supplies.
2. The FHQ CPFP advises U4 on child protection standards to ensure that facilities are secure and equipped to meet the specific needs of children.
3. U4 works with the FHQ CPFP to ensure that patrols are supplied with resources needed for emergency child protection assistance (e.g., medical kits, and child specific care supplies).

Medical Section

Objective: Provide medical support for children who might be injured during the operation.

The FHQ CPFP works with the Medical Section and Mission Support to develop a medical plan that considers the specific needs of children, including readiness for casualty evacuations of children who might be injured either because of direct

participation in hostilities or as collateral damage resulting from the military operation.

Possible actions (examples):

1. The Medical Section develops a CONPLAN focused on providing medical treatment to injured children, including emergency medical supplies, and ensuring prompt CASEVAC for those in need.
2. The FHQ CPFP reviews the CONPLAN to ensure that the specific needs of children, such as age-appropriate medical services, are considered.

UN Civil-Military Coordination Branch (U/G/S-9)

Objective: Coordinate civil-military activities with a focus on child protection.

Task: The FHQ CPFP advises U9 on integrating child protection considerations into this QIP, ensuring that the project addresses the needs of vulnerable children and mitigate risks.

Possible actions (examples):

1. U9 outlines planned QIPs and assesses their potential impacts on children.
2. In consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit, the FHQ CPFP reviews the projects, advising on integrating child protection measures. This includes guiding risk assessments and recommending mitigation strategies to minimize any negative impact on children.



EXERCISE 2.2:

United Nations Police Child Protection Focal Points

Instructions

- Examine the responsibilities of the United Nations Police (UNPOL) CPFP at the sector level in response to a child protection incident.
- Using the case study provided below, consider how the UNPOL CPFP can effectively coordinate responses to protect children and address the situation in collaboration with key stakeholders. In particular, consider:
 - ▶ The advisory and liaison role of the CPFP.
 - ▶ Collaboration with the host-State police.
 - ▶ Support for monitoring and reporting.
 - ▶ Training and capacity-building initiatives.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario⁴⁵

Two UNPOL officers return from a joint patrol with the host-State police. They met with social workers who reported that earlier that day they had witnessed an attack on the children's ward at the city's main hospital. Upon returning to the base, the two UNPOL officers meet with the UNPOL team leader and the UNPOL child protection focal point at the sector level.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Advisory and liaison role

- Conduct an immediate debrief with the UNPOL officers returning from the patrol and the team leader to gather detailed information about the attack. Consider conducting the debrief jointly with the host-State police.
- Alert the Sector Commander and UNPOL field units within the sector about the attack.
- Report the incident quickly to the Police headquarters (PHQ) CPFP to consult on possible response.
- Meet with civilian child protection staff at the Field Office to discuss the incident and coordinate response efforts.

Collaboration with the host-State police

- Work closely with the host-State police on providing visible presence, such as increased security at hospitals and other sensitive locations.

Support monitoring and reporting

- Record information from the two UNPOL officers, social workers, and any other witnesses of the attack.
- Compile and submit a report on the incident to the PHQ CPFP, civilian child protection staff, and your hierarchical supervisor in accordance with the established reporting and information-sharing channel.

Training and capacity-building

- In coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit, assist in designing and delivering training sessions for host-State police officers on child protection.

CHAPTER 3

Coordination and Collaboration with Other Stakeholders

Now that the roles and responsibilities of military and police child protection focal points in integrating child protection considerations at all levels are understood, and how the FHQ CFPF and PHQ CFPF must closely collaborate with their counterparts within their components is clear, it is important to recognize the other main stakeholders with whom the military and police CFPFs must collaborate. These stakeholders are both within and outside the UN peacekeeping operation. To achieve effective collaboration, UN military and police personnel should:

- **Identify the key stakeholders that play a role in leading or supporting the implementation of the child protection mandate in the mission area.**
- **Understand the roles of these stakeholders and how they will interact with the CFPFs.**
- **Be familiar with the coordination mechanisms in which involvement is required.**
- **Be aware of referral pathways for children victims of grave violations.**

Upon deployment, prioritize becoming familiar with the various coordination mechanisms involving both mission and external actors dedicated to child protection.

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

COORDINATION WITH UNITED NATIONS MISSION STAKEHOLDERS

Ensuring the protection of children requires coordinated action between UN civilian and uniformed components of the mission. Given the complexities of a multidimensional integrated mission involving numerous actors, concerted coordination efforts, liaison, and information-sharing are essential.

Military – Police Coordination⁴⁶

The UN military and police components have mutually reinforcing responsibilities regarding child protection, necessitating close coordination and interaction. Examples of effective UN military and police coordination may involve:

- **Joint planning and conduct of operations:** Developing integrated strategies and operational plans that address child protection, ensuring both military and police units work together seamlessly.
- **Information sharing:** Regular exchange of information on threats to children, incidents of grave violations against children, and other relevant information to enhance situational awareness and response.
- **Training:** Conducting joint training sessions to ensure both components understand each other's roles, responsibilities, and protocols related to child protection, including procedures for the apprehension, arrest, detention, and handover of children.



Goma, North-Kivu, DR Congo: The Special Representative of UNSG in DRC and Head of MONUSCO, Ms. Leila Zerrougui had a meeting with the Deputy force Commander General Bernard Commins, the Acting Deputy SRSG Ops and UN Police Commissioner, General Awale and Military officers to discuss the security situation in the eastern part of the country. Photo MONUSCO/ Myriam Asmani

- **Community engagement:** Collaborating on community outreach efforts to build trust and gather information that can inform protection strategies, ensuring that the needs and perspectives of children are considered.

The military and police CPFs can coordinate these efforts with the Child Protection Section/Unit through multiple mechanisms:

- **Mission-level meetings:** The FHQ and PHQ CPFs will likely participate in child protection coordination and information sharing meetings organized by the Child Protection Section/Unit at the mission level.
- **Sector-level coordination:** Coordination meetings will also take place at the field office level, and military and police CPFs at Sector (Brigade) HQ might participate accordingly.

Coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit

The civilian child protection staff should be one of the first points of contact in the mission, whether at mission HQ or the field office level. Led by a Senior Child Protection Adviser, the Child Protection Section/Unit (CPS/U) fulfils a crucial role in implementing the child protection mandate of the mission.⁴⁷ Effective coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit involves several key aspects:

- **Advisory and guidance role:** The CPS/U can provide critical advice and technical support to military and police personnel, including CPFs, on issues related to the protection of children in the mission area. Their expertise ensures that all child protection activities are aligned with UN policies and best practices. The CPS/U and the FHQ and PHQ CPFs should work closely together when developing or updating mission-specific child protection plans. The FHQ and PHQ CPFs should participate in all relevant meetings or discussions to ensure comprehensive input from all components.

- **Operational support:** The FHQ and PHQ CPFs should consult with and take advice from the CPS/U when contributing to relevant mission-based military and police planning processes, such as when developing operational plans, conducting risk assessments, or planning military/police operations.
- **Information sharing:** Child protection staff can facilitate the exchange of information and analysis on threats to children, incidents of grave violations against children, where appropriate, and other relevant child protection concerns. The military and police CPFs must share information on grave violations and threats against children with the CPS/U⁴⁸ for verification and follow-up.
- **Training:** Child protection staff can assist in designing and delivering training for military and police personnel to enhance their understanding and ability to protect children effectively. The FHQ and PHQ CPFs should work closely with the CPS/U in the design and conduct of induction briefings and in-mission training to ensure all personnel are adequately prepared to address child protection issues.

The Child Protection Section/Unit and military and police CPFs can streamline these efforts through several mechanisms:

- With the support of the CPS/U, the FHQ and PHQ CPFs should identify and attend relevant meetings (for example, coordination and information-sharing meetings) to ensure alignment of military and police efforts with child protection activities led by civilian counterparts in the mission.



The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Child Protection Unit hosted a two-day workshop in Rumbek for officers from the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) and National Police Service (SSNPS) on child rights and ways to prevent and end grave violations against them. UN Photo/James Mawien Manyuol

- When these meetings involve UN agencies, funds, and programmes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the FHQ and PHQ CFPs should consult CPS/U to determine their appropriate participation.
- The CPS/U can also contribute relevant information and analysis on violations and threats against children through the mission's POC coordination fora⁴⁹ as well as the Monitoring and Reporting Arrangement (MARA) working group on conflict-related sexual violence.⁵⁰

COORDINATION WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

In addressing violations against children, no single organization alone can provide the comprehensive range of support and services needed. Effective coordination between the Child Protection Section/Unit, UN agencies, funds and programmes, NGOs, and government entities is essential. This coordinated response involves multiple actors, each contributing their expertise. It helps prevent duplication of efforts and aligns strategies for a more streamlined and effective response.

Coordination with UN agencies, funds, and programmes and non-governmental organizations⁵¹

In the mission area, there are many UN agencies, funds, and programmes⁵² and NGOs⁵³ undertaking a broad range of activities in support of child protection. These actors possess extensive knowledge about the host country's dynamics, the conflict context and child protection issues. They can help foster relationships with key national stakeholders, including local authorities and civil society groups, which are essential for successful child protection efforts.

Close and systematic coordination with these entities is important for providing preventive and comprehensive responses to children at risk or victims of grave violations. This coordination can be achieved through several mechanisms:

- **Protection cluster and child protection sub-cluster⁵⁴:** At the country level, the protection cluster is the primary platform for coordinating protection activities within the humanitarian community. It facilitates the exchange of information and analysis on protection-related threats, including those against children, and supports informed decision making through regular assessments, advocacy, and monitoring of protection risks. Organizations within the child protection sub-cluster⁵⁵ work together with other specialist protection actors to offer essential and specialized services such as case management, mental health and psychosocial support, medical care, legal/justice support, and alternative care for children.
- **Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)⁵⁶:** Some of these entities are members of the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) that is responsible for the implementation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict at country level. The CTFMR collaborates closely with the protection cluster or child protection sub-cluster to ensure appropriate responses to grave violations against children are considered.



At the request of the Malian government, UN Police is providing a training to its Malian counterparts on crowd control techniques. Photo: MINUSMA / Blagoje Grujic

The Child Protection Section/Unit can help identify and facilitate contact with relevant actors, ensuring effective communication and coordination. Participation in coordination meetings enables organizations to have timely information to design effective responses for children. It is essential to respect the neutrality, impartiality, and independence of humanitarian actors in all interactions, as this is crucial for maintaining their operational safety and effectiveness.

Coordination with the host-State authorities

Governments hold the primary responsibility for protecting children and addressing grave violations against them. However, in situations of armed conflict, the coordination of actions to prevent and respond to child protection concerns is often led or co-led by other actors. This is due to several factors, including limited resources, the complexity of conflicts, and in some instances, the involvement of State actors in perpetrating violations against children.

Despite these challenges, effective child protection requires engaging with relevant State actors. These include national and local authorities, government ministries (such as the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Children/Women's Welfare, and Ministry of Social Affairs), national defense and security forces, judicial and correction actors, and social services..

The military and police CPFPS and the Child Protection Section/Unit will collaborate closely with relevant host-State authorities to strengthen their capacity in child protection through technical and operational support. The coordination is facilitated through various mechanisms:

- **Established coordination mechanisms:** In some contexts, there may already be coordination mechanisms focused on child protection, such as inter-ministerial committees, national working groups or task forces aimed at preventing child recruitment into armed forces or groups or at combating human trafficking.
- **Working meetings:** In other situations, working meetings are organized with national government counterparts to discuss interventions and coordinate efforts effectively.

Military liaison officers oversee all interactions and operations with the host-State's security forces. The FHQ CFPF should collaborate with these officers to ensure that child protection considerations are integrated into interactions and joint military activities. Coordination mechanisms involving national counterparts provide opportunities for advocacy on child protection. By working closely with military liaison officers, the FHQ CFPF contributes to ensuring that child protection priorities are effectively conveyed within these platforms.

Similarly, the PHQ CFPF can utilize coordination mechanisms to collaborate with host-State police and judicial actors, including those involved in juvenile justice. This collaboration can involve mentoring, advising, and training initiatives aimed at strengthening their child protection capacities. Where the host-State police have specialized child protection units, maintaining contact with these units will be beneficial.

SUPPORTING REFERRAL PATHWAYS FOR CHILDREN VICTIMS OF GRAVE VIOLATIONS

A range of organizations operating in the mission area can provide support to children victims of grave violations (e.g., interim care for children separated from armed forces or armed groups). While not all actors involved in the implementation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism are service providers, all have a responsibility to ensure that children who are victims of grave violations are referred appropriately so as to receive adequate services or other support.

UN military and police personnel, in particular military and police CPFPS, can play an important role in supporting existing referral mechanism, and help ensure that children victims of grave violations can receive the support they need (e.g., access to medical services, psychosocial care, legal assistance, access to reintegration programmes).

Military and police CPFPS should reach out to the Child Protection Section/Unit to be briefed on existing referral pathways in the mission area and understand how to support them. Since the referral mechanisms may differ from country to country as well as across various locations within the host country, and also evolve over time, it

is essential to hold briefings at regular intervals to ensure that UN military and police personnel maintain an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of referral pathways.

Military and police CPFPs should also discuss with the Child Protection Section/Unit how to coordinate engagement with referral mechanisms (for example, how should referrals be channeled, who should be informed, etc.). In some instances, UN uniformed personnel might provide immediate assistance to a child victim of a grave violation (e.g., medical assistance to a child victim of rape or other forms of sexual violence) before supporting referrals to other entities that can provide appropriate services or other support.

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY AND POLICE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

As a military or police CPFP, interaction with various stakeholders within and outside the mission is essential. Establishing strong working relationships is important, not only with military/police counterparts, but also across components, ensuring regular communication and collaboration. Upon assignment to serve as the CPFP, key actions include:

- ✓ Contacting the Child Protection Section/Unit to identify and map the organizations, structures and mechanisms involved in child protection within the area of operations (who is doing what, and where). This mapping will help orient efforts and ensure effective collaboration with relevant stakeholders. In particular, seek a briefing on referral pathways to facilitate proper support for children victims of grave violations.
- ✓ Developing a contact sheet to record all mission and external child protection actors for consultation, coordination, and/or information sharing.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Contact List Template

It is important to maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date record of mission and external child protection actors with whom consultation, coordination, and/or information sharing will take place within the area of operations. It is helpful to organize the contact list into key categories, such as civilian child protection staff, military and police child protection focal points, government officials, UN agencies, funds, and programmes, and NGOs. The list should be regularly updated to account for personnel rotations, and it should be included in the handover package for the incoming child protection focal points. The list can be adjusted depending on where the military or police CPFP is deployed.

Suggested contact list categories:

1. Civilian Child Protection Staff

- Senior Child Protection Adviser
- Headquarters
- Field Office

2. Military and Police Child Protection Focal Points (CPFPs)

- Headquarters
- Sector (Brigade) HQ
- Battalion HQ / Sub-Regional

3. Government

- Relevant Ministry Officials
- Local Law Enforcement Officials

4. UN Agencies, Funds, and Programmes

- UNICEF
- Other relevant UN agencies, funds, and programmes

5. Non-Governmental Organizations

- Child Protection Organizations

TABLE 10: Contact list template

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 1, Lesson 2: Roles and responsibilities of mission components and external partners, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>.
- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023), Module 5: How to collaborate and Coordinate on Child Protection in a UN Peace Operation, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police>.
- Handbook for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations (2023), Chapter 7: Coordination with External Actors, and Annex 1: Roles and Responsibilities of Mission Components for Child Protection: 2023.03 Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations.pdf. [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf)
- Policy on United Nations Field Missions: Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence (2019): 2019.35 United Nations Field Missions Preventing and responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (Policy).pdf. <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/>

DPO-DPPA-SRSG-SVC-OHCHR-Policy-on-Field-Missions-Preventing-and-Responding-to-CRSV-2020.pdf

- Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence (2020): 2020.08 UN CRSV Handbook.pdf.
<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020.08-UN-CRSV-Handbook.pdf>

EXERCISES

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of all mission components and external stakeholders is essential for the effective protection of children. The exercise accompanying Chapter 3 of the handbook focuses on the collaborative efforts necessary to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of children associated with armed forces or armed groups.



EXERCISE 3.1:

Coordinated Approach to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups

Instructions

- Using the scenario provided below, address the following tasks:
 - ▶ Identify stakeholders within the mission and external partners who should coordinate efforts in planning and implementing the child DDR programme.
 - ▶ Outline specific support that UN military and police personnel could provide in this context.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario

A Child Protection Officer and a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Officer, accompanied by the UN military, arrive in a remote village to negotiate the release of children associated with an armed group.

During their meeting with the commander of the armed group, they advocate for the immediate release of all children and inform the commander about the consequences of violations and abuses against children. They also present the national DDR programme to the commander, sharing examples from other regions where former children associated with armed groups have been successfully reintegrated, illustrating positive outcomes for community safety and cohesion.

Through several rounds of dialogue, the commander agrees to release the children. With the agreement in place, the Child Protection and DDR Officers reach out to relevant mission components and external partners to initiate the necessary preparations.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Roles in Planning and Supporting DDR for Children (Examples)	
1. Planning and designing the DDR process	
Coordination mechanism	Coordination objectives
National DDR Commission (Government ⁵⁷ and Mission leadership)	Ensure national ownership of the DDR programme
Technical Coordination Committee (Government ministries, Mission representatives, (e.g., DDR staff, CPS/U, in collaboration with the FHQ CPFP and PHQ CPFP, UN military, UNPOL), UN agencies, international and national child protection partners, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC))	Jointly plan and design the programme, define roles and responsibilities, mobilize resources, clarify information-sharing protocols, and develop release and reintegration strategies.
Child Protection sub-cluster (CPS/U, UN agencies, funds, and programmes, and child protection partners)	Coordinate inter-agency data collection and analysis, harmonize care through inter-agency standard operating procedures for case management, including referrals and appropriate care for children associated with armed groups, coordinate programme delivery to prevent duplication and promote complementarity of service, and contribute to recording and sharing information on grave violations against children through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

2. Implementing the DDR process	
Disarmament and reception	
Coordination mechanism	<i>Disarmament reception center:</i> Coordination mechanism includes government authorities, mission actors (e.g., DDR, CPS/U, in collaboration with the FHQ CPFP), UN military, UNPOL, UN agencies, funds and programmes, and child protection partners.
UN military role	▪ Disarm children with weapons. ▪ Secure the assembly sites. ▪ Secure routes that children will use to enter the assembly sites and/or provide military escorts to transport children to demobilization centers.

UN Police role	- Secure the assembly sites.⁵⁸ - Support the host-State police in addressing criminal activities within and around assembly sites (e.g., by providing advice and training, ensuring they develop effective procedures and processes for handling disarmament and demobilization aspects).
Civilian role	Receive and identify children.
Demobilization	
Coordination mechanism	<i>Demobilization sites:</i> Coordination mechanism includes government authorities, Mission actors (e.g., DDR, CPS/U, in collaboration with the FHQ CPFP), UN military, UNPOL, UN agencies, funds, and programmes, and child protection partners.
UN military role	- If children surrender to UN military personnel, handover children to civilian child protection staff following established protocols. - Secure demobilization sites, with particular attention to the safety and protection of children during their stay (e.g., through security patrols).
UN Police role	Secure demobilization sites.^{59, 60}
Civilian role	- Verify and register children. - Provide for immediate needs (e.g., medical and health screening, and treatment).
Interim care	
Coordination mechanism	<i>Interim care center:</i> Coordination mechanism includes government authorities, Mission actors (e.g., DDR, CPS/U), UN agencies, funds, and programmes, child protection partners, ICRC, national Red Crescent Society.
UN military role	
UN Police role	Provide perimeter security for the interim care centers, alongside the host-State police.
Civilian role	- Manage the interim care centers. - Provide essential services such as medical, psychosocial support, and counselling. - Conduct family tracing and reunification.

Reintegration	
Coordination mechanism	Coordination mechanism includes government authorities, Mission actors (e.g., DDR, CPS/U, Civil affairs), UN agencies, funds, and programmes, child protection partners, ICRC, national Red Crescent Society.
UN military role	■ Support community sensitization in preparation of returning children when engaging with communities during patrols.
UN Police role	■ Support the host-State police to discharge community-policing functions to maintain order and build trust within the community (e.g., disseminate messages discouraging the resort to arms among demobilized combatants and their families).
Civilian role	■ Conduct community-sensitization initiatives to prepare communities for the return of the children. ■ Deliver reintegration activities such as education, income generation, and skills training. ■ Monitoring and follow-up of children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups after their return to families and communities.



MONUSCO Force provides security escort during a child protection mission to engage with the Mai Mai UPDC near Butembo, North Kivu. Photo: Jacob De Lange

CHAPTER 4

Supporting Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations Against Children

UN uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations can support the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children. UN military or police personnel often serve as the mission's primary 'eyes and ears' in remote, hard-to-reach locations, or volatile hotspots that are not easily accessible to civilian staff, including child protection staff, due to security or other concerns. Among other responsibilities, the network of military and police CPFPs supports information-sharing on allegations of grave violations and threats against children with the Child Protection Section/Unit. The Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection and the Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection emphasize the requirement for all military and police personnel to share information on violations against children through their respective chains of command. To fulfil these responsibilities, UN military and police personnel should:

- **Learn about the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting.**
- **Be able to recognize the six grave violations against children in armed conflict.**
- **Understand the importance of sharing information on grave violations against children with the Child Protection Section/Unit for verification and follow-up, including being mindful of gender-specific vulnerabilities.**
- **Understand the role played by the Child Protection Section/Unit.**
- **Become familiar with the information-sharing and reporting channels on grave violations against children.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

THE MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISM

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) gathers accurate, timely, objective, and reliable information on grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict.

Information about these violations is collected in the field and transmitted to the UNSC through the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC). UN peacekeeping operations contribute to reporting by the Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMRs) (or CAAC Working Groups⁶¹, depending on the country) to the Security Council. The information provided by the CTFMRs (or CAAC Working Groups) informs both confidential and public reporting on grave violations against children, including the annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, country-specific

reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and Global Horizontal Notes.⁶² Information is also included in progress reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of mandates of UN peacekeeping operations, where relevant.

These reports identify parties to the conflict responsible for grave violations against children. This information allows the Security Council to take targeted measures against the perpetrators, including the imposition of sanctions, to deter future violations and hold accountable those responsible.

These reports also serve as tools for advocacy, policymaking, and informing programmatic response initiatives. They guide the allocation of resources, support the development of targeted intervention programmes, and facilitate the coordination of international and local efforts to protect children.

The Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting

The Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) is the primary coordination forum for implementing the MRM at the country level and is a valuable tool that missions have for sharing and analyzing information and patterns of grave violations against children. While distinct from the protection cluster and child protection sub-cluster operating in the country, the CTFMR collaborates with these clusters and keeps them informed of its activities.

Where UN peacekeeping operations with a child protection mandate are deployed, the CTFMR is co-chaired by the Head of Mission/Special Representative of the Secretary-General (sometimes by his/her Deputy) and the UNICEF Country Representative. The forum's membership includes representatives of other UN entities (including OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNHCR), and in some instances international and national NGOs.⁶³

The CTFMR is responsible for:

- **Information collection:** Collects and provides timely, objective, accurate, and reliable information on grave violations committed against children in armed conflict.
- **Information analysis and response:** Serve as a forum for analyzing information, discussing follow-up actions, and initiating appropriate responses.
- **Reporting:** Produce regular and timely reports on the situation of children affected by armed conflict.
- **Engagement and dialogue:** Engage in dialogue with parties to the conflict to sign and implement Action Plans, Handover Protocols, and other commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children, including securing the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups.⁶⁴

At mission level, the Senior Child Protection Adviser jointly coordinates the MRM with UNICEF and oversees the collection, analysis, and verification of MRM information as well as reporting.

SUPPORTING MONITORING AND REPORTING ON GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN

The MRM seeks to monitor the six grave violations against children perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, both State armed actors and non-State armed groups. These violations have been identified as particularly serious and warranting priority attention. All six grave violations must be monitored.

The Six Grave Violations against Children

The MRM monitors the actions of all parties to the conflict, encompassing both State armed forces and non-State armed groups.

These grave violations might occur throughout the mission area, necessitating that UN military and police personnel are capable of identifying and reporting such instances.

The six grave violations against children include:

■ Killing and maiming

- ▶ Killing of children refers to any action in the context of an armed conflict resulting in the death of one or more children.
- ▶ Maiming of children refers to any action resulting in a serious, permanent, disabling injury, scarring or mutilation to a child.

■ Recruitment and use

- ▶ Recruitment of children refers to compulsory, forced or voluntary conscription or enlistment of children into any kind of armed force or armed group(s) under the age stipulated in the international treaties applicable to the armed force or armed group in question.
- ▶ Use of children refers to the use of children by armed forces or armed groups in any capacity, including, but not limited to, children used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies and collaborators. It does not only refer to children who are taking or have taken a direct part in hostilities.⁶⁵

■ Attacks on schools and hospitals

- ▶ Targeting educational and medical facilities that cause the total or partial destruction of such facilities, and attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients).

■ Rape and other forms of sexual violence

- ▶ Violent acts of a sexual nature against children, including rape, other sexual violence, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, or enforced sterilization.

■ Abduction

- ▶ The removal, seizure, capture, apprehension, taking or enforced disappearance of a child either temporarily or permanently, including for the purpose of any form of exploitation of the child.

■ Denial of humanitarian access⁶⁶

- ▶ The intentional deprivation of or impediment to the passage of humanitarian assistance indispensable to children's survival, by the parties to conflict, including willfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions; and significant impediments to the ability of humanitarian or other relevant actors to access and assist affected children, in situations of armed conflict.⁶⁷

While these six categories of violations are the primary focus of reporting to the UN Security Council, the MRM should seek to monitor and respond to other violations as relevant to a particular context, with the aim to provide comprehensive protection for children. For example, the detention of children for alleged association with non-State armed groups or on national security-related charges has been reported on because of its close relation to recruitment and use. Another example is forced displacement, when it is related to a possible increase in child recruitment, sexual violence, or other grave violations.

Detailed examples provided in the table at the end of the chapter can offer further guidance in recognizing these violations.

How to Support Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations against Children

UN military and police personnel play a crucial role in alerting child protection staff about alleged grave violations against children, often being among the first to encounter these situations. Their strategic deployment within areas of operations positions them to detect incidents that might otherwise remain unobserved.

Upon witnessing or receiving credible reports, or second-hand information about alleged grave violations against children, UN uniformed personnel should promptly alert the military or police CFPs through their respective chains of command, using the established information-sharing and reporting channels. This ensures that the information is quickly conveyed to the Child Protection Section/Unit and others for verification and follow-up.

UN uniformed personnel must also accurately and adequately record the available information using designated reporting formats at the Sector (Brigade), Battalion/Regional, Company, and sub-unit levels. Reports should be based solely on the information available at the time of the event, without conducting further investigations or interviews with children. No photos or videos should be taken of the children. Whenever possible, the reports should include data disaggregated by age and sex, to help subject-matter experts better understand how armed conflict impacts boys, girls, and other gender identities differently and what kind of targeted protection actions should be undertaken.⁶⁸



The task is to record the information received or witnessed that is considered relevant for MRM reporting. Do not interview children; this is the responsibility of civilian child protection staff and/or other partners. Information gathering must comply with ethical and safety principles.

Confidentiality: Do not record any personal details of children, witnesses or sources of information (e.g., names, addresses). Share the information only with authorised individuals/organisations using secure channels, in line with the mission's information-sharing and reporting protocols. Consult with the CPS/U for guidance. Ensure the reports are stored securely and only accessible to authorised personnel.

Do No harm: Ensure that information gathering prioritises the child's safety and well-being throughout the process. Take steps to minimise any potential harm and maximise benefits, including making referrals to CPS/U for support and follow-up as needed.

Informed consent: Ensure that parents/guardians, and when appropriate, the children themselves, understand what information is being collected and how it will be used. Obtain consent before collecting and sharing information.

For example, data might indicate that boys or girls in specific age groups are more vulnerable to threats, such as recruitment into armed groups, or abduction. Understanding these dynamics helps child protection actors develop targeted strategies that address the specific needs of diverse groups of children and ensure effective use of resources.

It is important for UN uniformed personnel to understand that verification and follow-up is the responsibility of the Child Protection Section/Unit, whose personnel is specialized and trained on child protection.

Below are examples of how UN military and police personnel can support monitoring and reporting efforts.

Grave Violation	Observation and Information Gathering
Killing and maiming	☐ Monitor incidents where children are injured or killed by explosive ordnance, explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices, direct attacks, or crossfire. ☐ Record cases of injuries or fatalities due to armed conflict.
Recruitment and use of children	☐ During patrols and operational activities, observe possible signs of child recruitment, such as children carrying weapons, wearing military attire, or simply being present in locations associated with armed forces or armed groups.

Grave Violation	Observation and Information Gathering
Recruitment and use of children	☐ Record specific incidents where children are observed participating in combat or performing support roles within armed forces or groups, noting training activities or preparations for military engagement.
Attacks on schools, hospitals, and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals	☐ Monitor and record attacks or threats targeting educational facilities where children are present and attacks on education personnel. Note damages, disruptions, or evacuations affecting children's access to education. ☐ Record instances where attacks result in school closures affecting educational services for children. ☐ Observe and record impacts such as children dropping out of school or changes in attendance. ☐ Monitor and record attacks or threats of attacks on hospitals and medical personnel, noting instances of destruction or closure affecting access to life-saving health services for children. ☐ Record consequences of hospital attacks, including disruptions in medical care impacting the health outcomes of children.
Rape and other forms of sexual violence	☐ Pay attention to behavioral changes or physical signs in children that may indicate sexual violence. Recognize that both boys and girls may be victims of sexual violence. ☐ Note patterns of incidents, such as those occurring during attacks, or daily activities (e.g., while commuting to/from school, marketplaces, gathering firewood, or at check-points). ☐ Be alert to the fact that sexual violence perpetrated against children is vastly underreported owing to stigmatization, fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, absence of (or lack of access to) services, impunity, and safety concerns. ☐ Keep in mind that sexual violence against children can occur in conjunction with other grave violations (e.g., abduction) or during detention. ☐ Engage with women and men, youth, and vulnerable groups separately. ☐ Report cases of sexual violence against children.
Abduction	☐ Monitor areas vulnerable to abduction, such as during displacement, in camps for refugee or internally displaced persons (IDPs), or near conflict zones. Observe signs like sudden disappearances or organized movements involving children.

Grave Violation	Observation and Information Gathering
Abduction	☐ Record cases of children forcibly taken from families or communities by armed forces or armed groups, noting any evident trends related to specific purposes (e.g., recruitment, trafficking, or exploitation).
Denial of humanitarian access	☐ Observe areas where children face movement restrictions imposed by armed actors, hindering their access to humanitarian aid. ☐ Record instances where children are prevented from reaching distribution points or receiving essential aid.

TABLE 11: Examples of how UN uniformed personnel can support monitoring and reporting

ACTION PLANS TO END AND PREVENT GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN

Action Plans are a cornerstone of the UN’s strategy to address grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict and to ensure the accountability of parties to the conflict. They are concrete, time-bound and verifiable agreements between the United Nations and parties to the conflict listed in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.⁶⁹ Serving as a critical framework, Action Plans and other unilateral commitments are designed to end and prevent grave violations against children. In UN peacekeeping operations, the Child Protection Section/Unit (usually on behalf of the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting) engages in dialogue with parties to the conflict to negotiate Action Plans, ensuring that they commit to specific measures aimed at protecting children.

Once an Action Plan or a unilateral commitment is in place, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting monitors its implementation, ensuring that commitments made by parties to the conflict are being upheld, providing continuous oversight and reporting on progress. Parties to the conflict that sign Action Plans with the UN or adopt unilateral commitments and that implement their provisions can be removed from the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Additionally, dialogue may be conducted with parties to the conflict to secure commitments to release children in their custody, for example through the signing of the Protocol for the Handover of Children in Custody owing to their Association with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.⁷⁰ This protocol outlines the procedures for the safe and appropriate transfer of children detained for their alleged or actual association with armed forces or armed groups, ensuring they are handed over to child protection actors and/or civilian authorities. Children can be released in the absence of handover protocols as well.



The Handover Protocol on the Protection and Transfer of Children associated to Armed Forces and Groups to Civilian Authorities is signed and adopted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad, and SRSG Rugwabiza on behalf of the UN system in the Central African Republic with UNICEF Country Representative as witness, 2024. Photo: MINUSCA/Herve Cyriaque Serefia.

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY AND POLICE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

As a military or police CPFP, it is necessary to ensure that UN military and police personnel can recognize the six grave violations and share information internally for verification and follow-up by civilian child protection staff, thereby contributing to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. Key actions include:

- ✓ Being aware of the parties to the conflict listed for grave violations against children in the annexes of the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. UN military and police personnel are required to share information on violations against children committed by these parties as well as by all other armed actors operating within the area of operations.
- ✓ Using the appropriate terminology when referring to children associated with armed forces or armed groups (CAAFAG). Refrain from using the term 'child soldier' as children who are associated with armed forces or armed groups can be used to take direct part in hostilities but can also be used in supporting roles (e.g., cooks, porters, etc.).

Additionally, upon assignment to serve as the CPFP, it is recommended to:

- ✓ Review reporting formats to ensure they include requests for collecting information on grave violations against children, and that they require data disaggregation by age and sex whenever possible. Remind UN military and police personnel of these requirements.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Recognizing the Six Grave Violation against Children

There are several ways in which gender considerations should be reflected in the design and implementation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. This includes disaggregation of data according to sex (girls and boys) as well as sensitivity to the specific needs and coping mechanisms of girls and boys when dealing with all violations against children, particularly those that may relate to a child's sexuality or self-image.

Killing and Maiming	
Killing – Examples	
1	Direct targeting of children in bombings, shootings, crossfire, or military operations.
2	Use of explosive weapons in populated areas leading to child deaths.
3	Indiscriminate or misdirected air or drone strikes in civilian areas leading to child fatalities.
Maiming – Examples	
1	Children injured by crossfire between conflicting parties.
2	Landmines, cluster munitions, and improvised explosive devices maiming children.
3	Instances of torture resulting in serious or permanent injury to children.
Recruitment and use	
Recruitment – Examples	
1	Children forcibly recruited from their homes or schools.
2	Girls and boys coerced into joining armed groups through threats of violence against themselves or their families.
3	Reports of children being forcibly conscripted into military activities.
4	Use of propaganda or indoctrination to influence children to join armed forces or groups.
Use – Examples	
1	Children taking a direct part in hostilities.
2	Children utilized as cooks, porters, messengers, spies, and collaborators.
3	Instances of children being used for sexual violence or forced labor within armed forces and armed groups.

Attacks on schools and hospitals	
Examples	
1	Bombing or shelling of schools and hospitals, resulting in casualties among children, school workers, and healthcare workers.
2	Deliberate attacks on medical facilities, limiting access to healthcare services for children and families.
3	The use of schools for military purposes by armed forces or armed groups should also be monitored, such as: ■ Schools are occupied and used as housing and operational bases for military personnel. ■ Schools are used as strategic points for launching attacks or firing weapons. ■ Schools are repurposed to store military supplies, including weapons and ammunition. ■ Armed groups conducting military training exercises within school premises. ■ Schools are used as lookout points or observation posts to monitor enemy movements. ■ Schools are converted into makeshift detention centers for holding and interrogating prisoners.
Rape and other forms of sexual violence	
Examples	
1	Rape or sexual assault of children by members of armed forces or armed groups.
2	Forced marriages, enforced prostitution or sexual slavery involving children by armed forces or armed groups.
3	Gang rape, forced nudity and other forms of ill-treatment of children in detention.
Abduction	
The abduction of a child may take place within a country or territory, but a child may be moved to subsequent countries following the initial abduction. Examples	
1	Children abducted from their homes or schools, or on their way to/from school, for forced recruitment purposes.
2	Children abducted and subjected to sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, or forced marriage.
3	Children abducted and used as forced labor for several days.
4	Children seized during raids on villages for forced recruitment and use in a neighboring country.
Denial of humanitarian access	
Examples	
1	Denial of medical supplies, food, and other essential supplies to children.
2	Diversion of aid: Redirecting or stealing aid intended for children, preventing it from reaching its intended beneficiaries, causing severe shortages of essential supplies.

Denial of humanitarian access	
3	Attacks on civilian infrastructure critical for the delivery of humanitarian assistance or to the survival of children.
4	Movement restrictions: - Armed forces or armed groups setting up roadblocks or checkpoints that delay or prevent the passage of humanitarian aid vehicles. - Partial or complete blockades stopping the flow of humanitarian goods into conflict areas.
5	Bureaucratic and administrative impediments: Governments or controlling authorities requiring excessive documentation or imposing arbitrary delays for the movement of aid workers and supplies.
6	Attacks on aid workers, assets, and facilities: - Threats, assaults, abductions, or killings of humanitarian personnel. - Destruction or looting of vehicles, warehouses, offices, and supplies.
Detention of children	
	Any form of detention, imprisonment, or placement of a child in a public or private custodial setting from which the child is not permitted to leave at will, by order of any judicial, administrative or other public authority due to their actual or alleged association with an armed group, or a group designated as terrorist, the actual/alleged association of their family members, or on national security grounds.
	Examples
1	Children detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the UN.
2	Children detained for national security reasons.
3	Children detained following military operations on suspicion of insurgent affiliations.
4	Children detained for allegedly providing logistical support to armed groups, such as carrying messages or supplies.

TABLE 12: Recognizing the six grave violations against children

B. Recording Information on Grave Violations against Children

The quality of reporting is paramount, and information should be verified by civilian personnel trained in MRM methodology. Designated reporting templates used by UN military and police, respectively, should be designed in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit to clearly outline the information requirements for recording grave violations against children. Use the following points as a guide in ensuring the minimum key aspects are recorded.

Minimum Information to be Recorded in the Report	
<u>When and where:</u> When did the incident happen, and where did it take place	Date of Incident: [DD/MM/YYYY] Location of Incident: [Grid ref, GPS coordinates, significant landmarks] [Village/Town/District, Region] Time of Incident: [Morning/Afternoon/Evening/Night/Unknown]
<u>What:</u> What violation(s) were committed	Type of Violation: [Select all that apply: Killing/Maiming, Recruitment/Use, Sexual Violence, Abduction, Attacks on Schools/Hospitals, Denial of Humanitarian Access] – refer to Recognizing Grave Violations against Children Other violations against children: [Forced displacement, Trafficking]
<u>Who:</u> Who are the victims and the perpetrators	Number of Victims: [Total number] Age and Sex of Victims: [Provide disaggregated data] ■ Age Group (0-5, 6-12, 13-17) or exact age if known: ■ Sex (Male, Female,): Other vulnerabilities: [Ethnicity, religion, internally displaced person, refugee, unaccompanied minor, separated child, etc.] Number of alleged Perpetrators: [Total number, if known] Affiliation of alleged perpetrators: [Armed group, Military, Police, Other] ■ Name of armed group/armed force: [Specify unit/brigade/battalion number, and rank, if known] ■ Other identifying information linking to group membership: [uniforms worn, insignia, words spoken, if known]
<u>How and Why:</u> How and why did the incident take place	Brief Description of Incident: [Provide a brief account of the incident as observed or reported]
<u>Response</u>	Immediate Actions Taken: [Describe any immediate response actions taken by UN Military/Police or other entities, if known] Observations: [Describe any specific needs the children might have, based on visible indications or contextual understanding]
<u>Source of Information</u>	Contact details for follow-up: [obtain with informed consent]

Reminder:

For reasons of confidentiality, do not collect the following information as it can identify the children, witnesses, and sources of information. If such information is available, only share it with civilian child protection staff.

- Names of children, witnesses, and sources.
- Addresses or locations, especially in remote areas or where the details are unique.
- Photographs of children, witnesses, and sources.
- Names of the perpetrators.
- Any other information that may be linked back to an individual or group of individuals and place them at risk.

TABLE 13: Recording information on grave violations against children

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 1, Lesson 1: Children in armed conflict, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>.
- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023), Module 6: How to Monitor and Report Violations Related to Children's Rights, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police>.
- The Gender Dimensions of Grave Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict (2022): https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/UN_Gender-Dimensions-Grave-Violations-Against-Children-WEB-2.pdf
- Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (2020), Chapter 1: Conceptual foundation and the evolution of the conflict-related sexual violence mandate, and Chapter 4: Monitoring and Reporting and the survivor-centered approach and referral pathways: [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Conflict-Related%20Sexual%20Violence/2020.08%20UN%20CRSV%20Handbook.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Conflict-Related%20Sexual%20Violence/2020.08%20UN%20CRSV%20Handbook.pdf)

EXERCISES

Accurate and timely reporting of grave violations against children is essential to enabling appropriate responses that protect children and their communities, hold perpetrators accountable, and prevent future abuses. The exercises accompanying Chapter 4 of the handbook focus on strengthening the capacity of UN uniformed personnel to support the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children, and on enhancing the understanding of gender-sensitive approaches to address the distinct vulnerabilities and needs of boys and girls.



EXERCISE 4.1: **Recording and Sharing Information on Alleged Grave Violations against Children**

Instructions

- Using the scenario provided below, identify the minimum information related to allegations of grave violations against children that should be recorded in your report.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario

During a routine joint patrol, UN military personnel and UN Police officers visit a village near a conflict-affected area where reports of abductions have recently emerged. The local community leader informs the patrol that two days prior, an armed group forcibly took 12 children (8 boys and 2 girls) aged between 10 to 16 years from the village school. The community is deeply concerned for the children's safety.

Community members reported that the children were transported on foot into a nearby forest, an area known to be controlled by the armed group. Witnesses provided descriptions of the perpetrators, including details of their uniforms, weapons, and vehicles as well as the direction they travelled. At the school, evidence of the abduction included signs of forced entry, broken classroom furniture, and discarded belongings, such as children's bags and shoes. The villagers expressed deep fear of reprisals from the armed group, which added to their distress and reluctance to openly discuss the incident.

This is a *sample*. Please note that the example focuses specifically on children and that, in line with their mandates, UN uniformed personnel might also collect other information and take other actions beyond those reflected in the table below.

Date of Incident: 25/06/2024

Location of Incident: Coordinates: 14.55 N, 75.25 E; Village near Y province/region

Time of Incident: Afternoon

Type of Violation: Abduction of children **Other Violations Against Children:**

Number of Victims: 12

Age and Sex of Victims: [Provide disaggregated data when available]

- Age Group (0-5, 6-12, 13-17): Children (aged 10-16 years); Disaggregated data N/A
- Sex (Male, Female,): 8 males, 2 females, 2 unknown

Other specific vulnerabilities: The children were abducted directly from a school by an armed group. Concerns of possible forced recruitment and use and sexual violence due to the nature of the alleged perpetrator's operations.

Number of Perpetrators: Approximately 10 armed individuals

Affiliation: non-State armed group

- Name of armed group/armed force: XYZ Liberation Front
- Other identifying information linking to group membership: Armed individuals wore uniforms with the insignia of the XYZ Liberation Front; witnesses described the perpetrators as armed with assault rifles and travelling on foot toward a known armed group stronghold in the forest.

Description of Incident: During a routine joint patrol, we were informed by local sources that, two days prior, an armed group had abducted 12 children from the village school. In addition:

- Witnesses reported that the children were taken by force, with the armed group threatening anyone who resisted.
- Observations at the site indicated signs of forced entry into the school and scattered belongings of the children, including bags and shoes.
- Parents informed seeing the children being led away into the nearby forest, an area known to be under the control of the armed group.

Immediate Actions Taken: [Describe any immediate response actions taken by UN Military/Police or other entities, if known]

- Spoke with the local population to gather further details of the incident.
- Conducted an immediate assessment of community security concerns and informed chain of command on the need to enhance patrols in the area.
- Notified the mission's child protection staff about the incident.

Contact Details for follow-up: N/A



EXERCISE 4.2:

Reflecting on Gender-specific Impacts of Grave Violations against Children

Instructions

- Choose two to five of the reflection questions provided below to explore how gender influences the vulnerabilities and impacts of grave violations on boys and girls.
- Reflect on how societal norms, gender roles and the dynamics of conflict may shape the distinct ways in which boys and girls experience grave violations.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Questions

- What is the gender-specific impact of killing and maiming in conflict zones?
- How do gender norms affect the risks of killing and maiming for boys and girls?
- What are the distinct risks faced by boys and girls in recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups? How are they shaped by societal and cultural norms?
- How do attacks on schools affect boys and girls differently?
- How do cultural attitudes and gender norms impact access to education for boys and girls in situations of armed conflict?
- How do attacks on hospitals affect boys and girls differently?
- How do gender norms influence access to medical care for boys and girls in conflict zones?
- How do boys and girls experience sexual violence differently in conflict zones?
- What are the obstacles to reporting and seeking support for sexual violence, and how do these obstacles differ for boys and girls?
- How does abduction affect boys and girls differently in conflict zones?
- How do gender norms influence the likelihood and impact of abduction?
- How does the denial of humanitarian access affect boys and girls differently?
- How do gender norms influence the availability of humanitarian aid for boys and girls in conflict zones?

GUIDANCE TABLE

Killing and maiming

Reflection questions:

- What is the gender-specific impacts of killing and maiming in conflict zones?
- How do gender norms affect the risks of killing and maiming for boys and girls?

Children, regardless of their gender, are highly vulnerable to being killed or maimed in conflict zones. However, the gendered differences in impact are not always clear, partly due to inconsistencies in sex and age disaggregation in reporting. In some contexts, these differences are influenced by societal norms and the division of labor among children. Boys' exposure to risk is often linked to their responsibilities (e.g., herding, working outside the home) as well as their recruitment and use for active participation in hostilities. In contrast, girls' exposure to certain risks may be reduced due to restrictions on their movements and activities outside the home, imposed by families concerned about their safety.

Recruitment and use

Reflection questions:

- What are the distinct risks faced by boys and girls in recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups? How are they shaped by societal and cultural norms?

Generally speaking, boys are often recruited to serve in combat roles, where they may face direct exposure to conflict. However, the specific roles they are assigned can vary depending on the cultural and conflict context as well as the motivations and tactics of armed groups, which may be influenced by gendered perceptions of masculinity.

Girls, while often recruited to serve in support roles (e.g., cooking, cleaning), are also frequently subjected to sexual violence. The societal and cultural norms around their perceived vulnerability and need for protection play a significant role in shaping their recruitment experiences.

Moreover, in contexts where armed groups operate under ideologies with strong gendered implications, the recruitment and use of children may reflect these groups' distinct, gender-specific motivations for targeting boys and girls.

United Nations uniformed personnel should never make assumptions about the risks or experiences of children based solely on gender or societal expectations. Each situation is unique, and assumptions can undermine protection efforts.

Attacks on schools and hospitals

Reflection questions:

- How do attacks on schools affect boys and girls differently?
- How do cultural attitudes and gender norms impact access to education for boys and girls in situations of armed conflict?

Boys and girls face significant risks during attacks on educational institutions, which may occur when schools are deliberately targeted during conflict. Boys may be more vulnerable to attacks aimed at recruitment, while female students and teachers may be targeted for ideological reasons designed to enforce strict gender norms or restrict girls' access to education.

Cultural attitudes and safety concerns can further exacerbate the impact of attacks on schools. Families may withdraw girls from schools due to fear of threats, abduction, or sexual violence. These obstacles reflect broader gendered vulnerabilities in conflict settings, where education for girls may be deprioritized, and cultural norms discourage their participation in public life.

Reflection questions:

- How do attacks on hospitals affect boys and girls differently?
- How do gender norms influence access to medical care for boys and girls in conflict zones?

Attacks on hospitals impact both boys and girls by limiting access to essential medical care, potentially increasing mortality. The impact on boys and girls may differ due to gender-specific healthcare needs. For example, the destruction of health facilities, particularly those providing sexual and reproductive health services, can prevent girls of childbearing age and victims of sexual violence from accessing care, increasing their vulnerability to childbirth complications and maternal deaths. Reporting on these attacks is not always disaggregated by sex, which can make it challenging to fully capture and analyze their gendered impact.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence

Reflection questions:

- How do boys and girls experience sexual violence differently in conflict zones?
- What are the obstacles to reporting and seeking support for sexual violence, and how do these obstacles differ for boys and girls?

Girls are disproportionately affected by rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations, with this impact further exacerbated by, among others, harmful social norms, discriminatory views on gender roles, and the general discrimination against women and girls in many societies. These factors create

an environment where violence is normalized, making girls particularly vulnerable and discouraging them from reporting incidents due to stigma and ostracization.

Boys may experience sexual violence in recruitment contexts, as a form of torture, or in detention settings. Societal attitudes often downplay the severity of sexual violence against boys, rooted in harmful stereotypes about masculinity. This creates unique obstacles to reporting for boys, who may fear about being perceived as weak, or not believed.

Abduction

Reflection questions:

- How does abduction affect boys and girls differently in conflict zones?
- How do gender norms influence the likelihood and impact of abduction?

Both boys and girls are at risk of abduction, though the nature of their abduction and the violations they experience after being abducted often differ based on gender. The circumstances, causes and violations associated with abduction are shaped by societal norms and gender expectations, influencing the roles that boys and girls are forced to assume within different conflict-related contexts.

Boys are often abducted for recruitment and use, or forced labor, where they are exposed to direct conflict and exploitation. Their roles are shaped by gendered expectations of strength and utility in conflict. Girls are more frequently abducted for sexual violence, including sexual slavery or forced marriages. Gendered perceptions of vulnerability and societal views on girls' roles in conflict drive their targeted abduction for these exploitative purposes.

Denial of humanitarian access

Reflection questions:

- How does the denial of humanitarian access affect boys and girls differently?
- How do gender norms influence the availability of humanitarian aid for boys and girls in conflict zones?

The impact of the denial of humanitarian access for children may differ based on their gender, increasing the vulnerability of boys and girls in different ways. The analysis of the gendered impact is often limited due to the lack of data disaggregated by sex, partly because the nature of such incidents may not always reveal the direct physical impact on a specific child, even though the consequences for children are still likely. Girls may face additional barriers due to cultural and social restrictions on their movements, limiting their access to essential aid and services. Boys may be denied humanitarian assistance as a consequence of being perceived as combatants or threats, particularly by local actors controlling aid distribution.



*Schools, hospitals and places of worship destroyed during clashes in Tambura, Western Equatoria.
Photo: Nektarios Markogiannis/UNMISS*

CHAPTER 5

Strengthening Early Warning to Prevent Violations Against Children

UN military and police personnel can play an important role in identifying and reporting threats to children. By maintaining situational awareness, UN uniformed personnel can gather information about indicators and signs of threats, contributing to understanding why children are being targeted, identifying those responsible for the threats, and their consequences. This feeds into the mission's early warning systems, helping alert child protection staff and decision-makers to serious threats and their potential impact on children. To effectively support early warning efforts, UN military and police personnel should:

- **Understand the relationship between threats, risks, and early warning indicators.**
- **Be familiar with existing early warning indicators of grave violations against children.**
- **Be able to tailor, develop and use early warning indicators to detect significant threats and assess potential risks to children, in collaboration with the Child Protection Section/Unit.**
- **Identify ways to integrate early warning indicators into the work of the military and police components.**
- **Identify key partners within the military or police component and across other mission entities to collaborate with on early warning efforts.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

LINKING EARLY WARNING, THREATS, AND RISKS FOR CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

Understanding the relationship between early warnings, threats, and risks in the context of children and armed conflict is important for situational awareness and timely intervention.

Early warnings are serious and credible threats identified by the mission that put children at risk. While the terms 'threats' and 'risks' are often used together, they must be considered separately to understand their impact, define, or adjust indicators, and determine the appropriate actions to take.



FIGURE 1: Early warning, threats, and risks

Early warning indicators help mission personnel detect situations, events, or behaviors that require attention to prevent conditions from worsening and leading to grave violations against children.

These indicators can be broad, such as pervasive conflict or climate-related challenges that contribute to multiple threats and necessitate long-term responses. They can also track signs of potential or imminent threats through more specific information, such as armed groups moving near areas where children gather or transit. Threats escalate risks, including physical violence, psychological trauma, and loss of access to education and health services, among others.

By consistently monitoring EWIs, UN military and police personnel can predict and mitigate both immediate and future risks, as well as factors that increase those risks. This helps protect children from the impacts of armed conflict by enabling early action and prevention.

EARLY WARNING INDICATORS OF GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN

UN uniformed personnel, particularly CPFs, should be familiar with existing early warning indicators (EWIs) of the six grave violations against children that were developed to help UN peacekeeping operations better integrate child protection considerations in their situational awareness and early warning and response efforts:

- **Structural indicators** are key ‘readers’ of the mission context and conflict background, including on causes of the crisis. They enable UN personnel, prior or in the execution of their tasks, to verify macro-level conditions and patterns potentially impacting on the rights of children.
- **Process/outcome indicators** enable UN personnel to verify efforts (process) and effects and results (outcomes) of measures taken by national actors for the prevention of grave violations, including those they are directly mandated to influence.
- **Warning signs** can include indications of occurrences, behaviors, and specific situations specifically observable at the operational and tactical level and enable UN personnel to anticipate and prevent deteriorating conditions leading to grave violations against children. Warning signs contribute to information that uniformed personnel, JMAC, Child Protection, Human Rights, Women’s Protection Advisers and other key mission components and partners are tasked to detect, analyze, monitor, and report.

To see the complete set of early warning indicators of the six grave violations against children in peacekeeping settings, consult the Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), annex 9.

UN uniformed personnel can also adapt existing EWIs or choose to develop local context-specific ones to address threats and child protection concerns, tailoring them to their operational environment. This requires a systematic, contextual, and inclusive approach.

The following guidelines aim to assist UN military and police personnel in establishing criteria to ensure that EWIs are relevant, practical, and actionable:

- **Relevant:** Define the scope of the EWIs, acknowledging its potential to address one or more grave violations, as well as other types of violations such as arbitrary detention and harmful traditional practices. When developing EWIs, consider potential warnings, such as community alerts of armed groups targeting children, political and public speeches inciting violence, or climate-related crises like crop failures that lead families to withdraw children from school.
- **Context-based:** Tailor the EWIs to the local context by considering cultural factors, community perceptions, and the history of grave violations in the area of responsibility. In coordination with child protection staff, regularly engage with local authorities, civil society, teachers, and parents – including parents of child victims of violations – who can help identify early signs of grave violations against children. Consider cultural norms that may affect boys and girls differently and ensure the language and scope of EWIs reflect child protection and human rights standards.
- **Clear and understandable:** Ensure each EWI is clearly defined and easy to understand. Use straightforward language that can be easily interpreted by both mission personnel and external partners. For instance, replace vague terms like ‘irregular recruitment’ with clear descriptions such as ‘armed groups recruiting children in schools’.
- **Response-oriented:** Develop EWIs that uniformed personnel can act upon within their mandate and capabilities. For instance, if EWIs aim to identify threats to children related to cross-border arms trafficking, ensure the mission can respond directly or in cooperation with partners. An integrated approach ensures coordination among mission partners, as some EWI-related information may require follow-up by civilian personnel, such as child protection and human rights staff.
- **Gender-sensitive:** Apply a gender lens when monitoring early warning indicators. This means looking closely at how boys, girls and other gender identities may experience risks and violations differently due to gendered vulnerabilities and roles. It is important to record EWI data separately for boys and girls to identify trends and changes over time.
- **Child-centered:** Highlight specific vulnerabilities, such as the targeting of orphans, displaced or refugee children, or those from minority groups, and focus on supporting children’s resilience. For instance, when defining EWIs related to the presence of children in public gatherings, clarify that the concern is not necessarily the presence of children, but rather the absence of law enforcement and protection mechanisms that enable them to participate peacefully.

- **Locally owned:** When developing EWIs, ensure they take in account the roles and responsibilities of local actors and institutions with a view to strengthen local inclusivity and ownership.

Selecting, tailoring, and developing EWIs for grave violations against children requires a collaborative approach to ensure their integration into the early warning system of the mission, at both the mission headquarters and field levels. When selecting, tailoring, and/or developing early warning indicators, UN uniformed personnel should always work closely with the Child Protection Section/Unit.

Refer to the example at the end of the chapter on adapting the early warning indicator for the recruitment and use of children.

UTILIZING EARLY WARNING INDICATORS TO DETECT THREATS

Once EWIs have been selected, tailored, or developed, it is essential for UN military and police personnel to actively apply these indicators to detect potential threats to children and gather relevant data and information. Personnel tasked with identifying alerts and early warnings can ‘read’ the environment through:

- **Direct observation:** This includes patrols, UN military experts on mission (UNMEMs), co-locations, border monitoring, unmanned aircrafts, and coordinated efforts with the Child Protection Section/Unit and other mission partners, including through Joint Protection Teams (JPTs).⁷¹
- **Engagement with local communities:** This involves working with engagement platoons/teams, community-oriented policing, Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs)⁷², and seeking the collaboration of Community Alert Networks (CANs), local protection committees, civil society, and other local actors.
- **Monitoring of various sources:** This includes gathering data from primary and secondary sources, such as field and community reports, local authorities and local networks’ alerts, public speeches, radio broadcasts, internet/social media, as well as mission platforms such as SAGE and Unite Aware.⁷³

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF EARLY WARNING INDICATORS

It is important that UN uniformed personnel regularly assess the effectiveness and impact of the early warning indicators they use to ensure they remain suitable for anticipating grave violations against children. As the operational environment evolves and new threats against children emerge, continuous evaluation of these indicators is essential. This ongoing assessment allows personnel to adapt to changing dynamics and enhance their responsiveness throughout distinct phases of the peacekeeping operation.

The guiding questions below can support uniformed personnel in assessing the contribution and impact of EWIs within relevant areas of the early warning system. Assessments should always be conducted in collaboration with the Child Protection Section/Unit.



Survey for Uniformed Personnel: Assessing the Effectiveness of Early Warning Indicators

Section 1: Operations and Response

1. Are EWIs effectively linked to preventive actions and operational decisions (e.g., patrol routes, community engagement, or establishing temporary operating bases)?
2. Do recurrent alerts/early warnings related to violations against children trigger investigations, advocacy, and other responses aimed at strengthening accountability measures for perpetrators?

Section 2: Reporting and Communication

1. Do EWIs enable uniformed peacekeepers to gather accurate and clear information that leads to timely interventions by uniformed personnel and mission partners?
2. Is there a reliable line of communication between uniformed personnel and child protection actors to share alerts/early warnings without delay?

Section 3: Assessing Trends

1. Are uniformed analysts using EWIs to develop and monitor databases, track trends, and map hotspots?
2. Is there evidence that threats and violations against children, especially in monitored areas, are decreasing over time?

Section 4: Integration and Collaboration

1. Are EWIs and threats data of grave violations integrated into Peacekeeping-Intelligence, operation plans, and broader mission strategies?
2. Are national security forces and other national counterparts properly trained to detect threats using child-centered and gender-sensitive EWIs, provide support for victims and take prompt action against perpetrators?
3. What feedback have communities provided on the use and impact of EWIs?

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY AND POLICE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

As a military or police CPFP it is important to ensure that early warning indicators related to child protection are integrated into mission processes and utilized effectively by military and police personnel. Upon your assignment to serve as the CPFP, key actions include:

- ✓ Becoming familiar with global and mission-specific guidelines, such as on Peacekeeping-Intelligence (PKI), Early Warning and Rapid Response (EW/RR), protection, and operational orders and directives related to early warning. This includes, where applicable, the Force Commander's or Police Commissioner's Directives on Child Protection.

- ✓ Reviewing the early warning indicators of the six grave violations against children, along with any other EWIs adopted by the mission (e.g., CRSV, gender, and the protection of civilians).
- ✓ Reviewing reporting formats, patrol questionnaires, task sheets, and threat matrices to ensure the integration of EWIs and age and sex disaggregated data.
- ✓ Becoming familiar with internal and mission-specific early warning mechanisms, such as Early Warning/Rapid Response Cells, PKI structures, Community Liaison Assistants, and other stakeholders involved in early warning systems.
- ✓ Reviewing the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, as well as police and human rights reports for relevant information regarding threats to children.
- ✓ Ensuring in-mission training modules include sufficient time for practical exercises related to early warning systems and EWIs to prepare personnel for field implementation.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Example: Adapting the Early Warning Indicator of Recruitment and Use of Children

EWI: [Community reports of] boys and girls being gathered by unknown individuals [at night].

Elements in square brackets can be included in the EWI as options.

Relevant: The EWI is directly linked to the risk of child recruitment and use, indicating potential threats from armed groups or other criminal elements.

Context-based: This EWI may suggest a recruitment tactic targeting children, especially in rural or remote areas. The unknown individuals may be disguised, foreign, or otherwise unidentifiable to the community. Focusing on night-time gatherings highlights a high-risk period when children and the community are more vulnerable, as surprise or lack of preparedness reduces their ability to respond.

Response-oriented: The emphasis on night-time activity may reflect the mission's limited capacity to ensure a presence during those hours. This gap could necessitate exploring ways to strengthen posture and deterrence through increased night patrols or enhanced surveillance to protect local communities. In situations where the mission cannot maintain a stable or temporary presence, the community may serve as the sole data source and may require support, such as mobile phones or improved access to communicate with the mission and connect with local defense and security forces.

Clear and understandable: The EWI is defined clearly using simple, non-technical language, making it easy for both uniformed personnel and civilian stakeholders, as well as national counterparts, to understand and act upon.

Gender-sensitive: By using the terms ‘boys’ and ‘girls,’ the EWI reflects how gender differences can influence the types and severity of violations boys and girls may face. The EWI should include guidance to ensure that data is disaggregated by sex and age to accurately assess gender-specific risks.

Child-centered: Understanding the intent of the ‘unknown individuals’ in relation to the children is key to assessing the risk as well as to understand how the community perceives these incidents. For example, the gathering of children may lead to intimidation, abduction, or direct violence, each with specific consequences. When disaggregating information, it is also important to consider factors that highlight the specific vulnerabilities and needs of the affected children.

Locally owned: This EWI empowers the local community by involving them in the reporting process, strengthening their role as key stakeholders within the early warning system.

B. Developing Early Warning Indicators for Child Protection

Should the need to develop new EWIs, or review existing ones, arise, UN uniformed personnel, and specifically military and police child protection focal points, should consider the following steps:

- ☐ Consult with the Child Protection Section/Unit.
- ☐ Consult with personnel within their respective components at mission headquarters and in the field, including personnel from Peacekeeping-Intelligence, operations, planning, training, legal and best practices, to brainstorm on effective indicators addressing information requirements and operational challenges in the different areas of responsibility.
- ☐ Collaborate and exchange information with other protection partners, particularly regarding thematic EWIs already incorporated into mission guidance and operations (e.g., human rights, gender, conflict-related sexual violence, and protection of civilians).
- ☐ Liaise with Joint Operations Centers and the Joint Mission Analysis Centers to understand how indicators are framed to develop analysis, situational awareness, and inform decision-making.
- ☐ Engage with relevant units of host-State security forces (armed forces and police) including any appointed child protection focal points, to assess their early warning systems and indicators, if/when established.
- ☐ In coordination with Community Liaison Assistants and the Child Protection Section/Unit, consult with local communities, including local protection committees and civil society, including women’s organizations, child protection NGOs, students, and teachers to gather feedback on EWIs and integrate local perceptions and concerns.

- ☐ Utilize mission resources such as databases, matrices, and situational awareness platforms (e.g., SAGE and Unite Aware) as well as data sources for EWIs including patrol reports and debriefs, human rights and political reports, as well as reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence.
- ☐ Review reliable data and information from open sources external to the mission, NGO reports, host-State police reports, radio broadcasts, social media, newspapers, and public speeches.

C. Checklist: Integrating early warning indicators of grave violations into mission mechanisms and processes

This checklist outlines opportunities for incorporating EWIs into key military, police, and broader mission mechanisms and activities related to early warning. These include data gathering and analysis, reporting, planning and operations, and coordination. By following these steps, collaboration among relevant teams and partners involved in early warning efforts can be improved, decision-making strengthened, and rapid responses enabled to better protect children in conflict-affected areas.

Key aspects to consider

Information Acquisition, Analysis, and Reporting

1	Embed EWIs into reporting mechanisms	☐ Military and police platoon commanders, in coordination with military and police CPFs, should ensure that EWIs are embedded into reporting templates and task sheets for systematic collection of critical information on threats of grave violations against children.
2	Conduct EWI-focused briefings	☐ Platoon commanders, U/G/S-3 officers, UNMEMs, and police advisors, along with military and police CPFs, should brief all units on identifying and reporting child-specific threats using EWIs. Emphasize the importance of recognizing and reporting threats in a gender-sensitive manner.
3	Utilize mission EWI-centered analysis & role of JOC and JMAC	☐ U/G/S-2 and police crime analysts, in coordination with military and police CPFs, should review and analyze EWI-related information received from platoons and other sources. This information should be cross verified with CPS/U prior to being integrated into mission platforms such as SAGE and Unite Aware. ☐ Uniformed personnel in JMAC and JOC roles should ensure EWI-related information is labelled (as an alert or early warning), added to matrices maintained by JOCs and early warning/rapid response cells, and shared with the mission, including the Child Protection Section/Unit, to inform operational planning.

4	Integrate EWIs into Peacekeeping-Intelligence plans and scenarios	☐ U/G/S-2 and police crime analysts should incorporate EWIs and information on threats against children into their Mission Information Acquisition Plans to inform requirements for collection of information. Use EWIs to map hotspots and develop scenario-based courses of action to prevent threats against children.
5	Focus on gender-specific impact	☐ In consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit, ensure that EWI reports and analyses not only quantify violations but also examine their different impacts on boys and girls, and collaboration with local partners to understand these dynamics.

Community Engagement

6	Promote use of EWIs in communities	☐ Engagement teams, UNMEMs, and community-led policing initiatives, supported by CLAs and in coordination with CPS/U, should establish communication channels with local communities, including CANs, to integrate EWIs into local early warning and protection systems.
7	Incorporate EWIs into awareness-raising activities	☐ During sensitization efforts targeting at-risk communities, uniformed personnel should utilize EWIs to raise awareness about threats to children, ensuring that examples are adapted to local perceptions.
8	Build confidence and enhance information exchange	☐ Military and police CPFs, supported by CLAs, and in coordination with CPS/U, should facilitate dialogues with community leaders to improve information sharing and collaboration regarding child protection and EWIs.

Capacity Development

9	Integrate EWIs into training	☐ Include EWIs in training and capacity-building activities for national and local authorities, host-State police, and security forces, ensuring uniformed trainers, analysts and planners collaborate on these efforts. ☐ Specialized Police Teams and police CPFs should collaborate with host-State counterparts to jointly develop, analyze, and monitor EWIs.
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Planning and Operations

10	Embed EWIs in planning and operations documents	☐ U/G/S-5, U/G/S-3 (and U/G/S-3/5), and police planners, in coordination with military and police CPFs and in cooperation with other mission components and partners, should ensure EWIs are embedded into planning documents, including concepts of operations (CONOPS), operational orders (OPORDs), fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) as well as UN Police operation plans (OPLAN) to strengthen operational strategies related to child protection.
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11	Utilize EWIs for leadership and operations	☐ Briefings by field commanders, in coordination with military and police CPFs, should incorporate EWIs into patrol planning and assignments checklists. ☐ EWIs should be referenced in debriefings by platoons and JPTs' team leaders as well as in JOC-led meetings that focus on identifying threats and required response actions.
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Strengthening Response Mechanisms

12	Strengthen the link between early warning and response	☐ Establish open communication channels between EWI providers and operations planners to enable rapid and informed responses to threats against children.
13	Monitoring response impact	☐ Continuously assess the effectiveness of responses to threats and use the findings to refine EWIs and improve future actions.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

14	Document lessons learned	☐ Military and police CPFs, in coordination with CPS/U, uniformed Best Practices officers, and the mission's Policy and Best Practices Officer (PBPO) should facilitate the collection of lessons learned and best practices to highlight the effective impact of EWIs of the grave violations in strengthening the link between early warnings and rapid responses.
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TABLE 14: Checklist: Integrating early warning indicators of grave violations into mission mechanisms and processes

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 3, Lesson 2: Military component child protection roles and tasks, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>
- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023), Module 2: How to support child-friendly prevention and diversion, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police>.
- Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), Chapter 8: Prevention, and Annex 9: Early Warning Indicators of the Six Grave Violations Against Children: [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf)
- Early warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence matrix: <https://www.stoprapenow.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Matrix-Early-Warning-Indicators-of-CRSV-Online-Version.pdf>.

EXERCISES

Effective early warning is crucial for identifying and addressing emerging threats to children in conflict zones. The exercise accompanying Chapter 5 of the handbook focuses on understanding how early warning indicators can be integrated into mission products and enhancing the ability of UN military and police personnel to identify and prioritize early warning indicators.



EXERCISE 5.1:

Integrating early warning indicators into Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC) products

Instructions

- Considering the scenario provided below, select five indicators from the list of early warning indicators of the six grave violations available in the Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), annex 9, that the mission could prioritize to monitor recruitment and use of children.⁷⁴
- For each indicator, develop a brief explanation of why you selected it.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below.

Scenario

You are a Military Analyst assigned to the Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) of a UN peacekeeping operation. You have been tasked with contributing to the development of the mission's Protection of Civilians trend analysis, focusing specifically on children. Your main task is to come up with suggestions on how the mission can improve its ability to monitor conditions and patterns of grave violations against children in the host country to inform strategic and operational planning and decision-making. You did some research and learned that several parties to the conflict in the host country are responsible for grave violations against children, in particular, recruitment and use of children. You met with child protection staff to be briefed on recent trends in grave violations and learned that there has been an increase in recruitment and use of children verified by the UN in recent months.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Indicators Why you should consider selecting them	
<u>Structural indicators</u>	
Presence of armed groups in areas/regions where communities (and children) live	The proximity of armed groups to the civilian population, including children, can significantly increase the risk of recruitment and use, especially in instances where such groups do have a history of recruitment and use of children. Armed groups often exploit local communities for logistical support, recruitment, and other purposes. Monitoring the presence and movement of armed groups allows for early identification of high-risk areas and communities.
History of recruitment and use of children and other grave violations (and level of commitment to stop them) attributed to specific armed forces/groups	Parties to the conflict with a documented history of recruiting and using children are likely to continue the practice, particularly if they have not demonstrated commitment to cessation or faced accountability. Tracking historical patterns and commitments provides insights into the likelihood of recurring violations, helping to focus monitoring efforts on specific armed forces/groups and/or areas.
External support and/or sponsorship of armed groups likely to influence armed groups support to communities as well as decisions on (and need for) forced recruitment of children	External support, such as funding or military resources, can strengthen armed groups, affecting their strategies. Understanding the role played by external actors is crucial for assessing armed groups' motivations and guiding targeted interventions, including advocacy.
Presence of refugees and/or internally displaced persons (IDPs), including unaccompanied or separated children	Refugees and/or internally displaced persons, especially unaccompanied or separated children, are particularly vulnerable to grave violations, including recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups seeking to take advantage of their lack of protection.
Host state strategy, willingness, and capacity to prevent grave violations against children	The host State has a primary role in preventing grave violations against children. A lack of strategy, political will, or capacity leaves children more vulnerable to recruitment and other abuses by parties to the conflict. Assessing the willingness and capacity of the host State to act informs engagement strategies and highlights gaps where UN support or advocacy on child protection might be needed.
Accountability mechanisms and measures taken against perpetrators of grave violations against children	The absence of functioning accountability systems allows grave violations against children to persist. Perpetrators who operate with impunity are more likely to continue their actions without fear of retribution. Monitoring accountability mechanisms identifies impunity trends and informs advocacy efforts to strengthen justice systems and hold perpetrators responsible.

CHAPTER 6

Dealing with Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

Beyond supporting monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children, UN military and police personnel have a duty to actively respond to these violations. Decisive and appropriate actions must be taken to ensure that all children encountered are treated in accordance with international law and relevant UN policies and guidelines. This commitment requires a proactive approach to child protection, encompassing preparedness, legal safeguards, and comprehensive support for affected children. To fulfil these responsibilities effectively, UN military and police personnel should:

- **Enhance preparedness to manage situations involving children associated with armed forces or armed groups.**
- **Be aware of the protections due to children associated with armed forces or armed groups apprehended, arrested, or detained by UN peacekeeping operations.**
- **Support efforts related to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of children.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

DEALING WITH CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES OR ARMED GROUPS

UN uniformed personnel may encounter children in the presence of armed forces or armed groups. These children may be involved with the armed force or group in various capacities, leading to a wide range of possible interactions. When dealing with children associated with armed forces or armed groups (CAAFAG), UN military and police personnel must effectively balance operational requirements with fundamental principles of child protection.

If children are participating in combat against the UN peacekeeping force, consider the following actions:

- **Place the best interests of the children at the forefront:** Recognize that children engaging in combat often do so under duress or coercion and are victims of recruitment. Prioritize actions that reduce harm and ensure their safety, while recording and sharing information on instances of recruitment and use of children for follow up, including accountability and future advocacy.
- **Recognize the potential threat posed by children associated with armed forces or armed groups:** While recognizing that children are victims of recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups, operational planning should account for scenarios where they may pose risks due to their direct involvement in hostilities. Prioritize the protection and disengagement of these children while ensuring measures are in place to mitigate risks to both UN uniformed personnel and children themselves.



Beni Territory, North Kivu Province, DR Congo: The joint FARDC-MONUSCO forces are carrying out military actions in the context of operation "Usalama" (Security) with the aim of neutralizing armed groups in eastern DR Congo. Photo: MONUSCO/Force

- **Prioritize non-lethal methods:** Explore possible non-lethal methods to manage situations involving children, including de-escalation tactics or other tools that minimize harm. For example, verbal de-escalation tactics can help reduce tension and encourage disengagement.
- **Take offensive action:** If confronted with a situation requiring the use force involving children, strictly adhere to the mission's mandate, Rules of Engagement (ROE) or Directive on the Use of Force (DUF). Force should be used as a measure of last resort and be proportional. Following military action, ensure immediate medical attention, including casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) when required, in line with applicable DPO guidance.⁷⁵ Additionally, facilitate referrals of affected children to child protection actors or designated service providers for further assistance and support.

Comprehensive scenario training is crucial to ensure that UN military and police personnel is prepared and possess the necessary competencies to manage these interactions. Training can help prepare personnel for encounters with children associated with armed forces and armed groups, prevent casualties and unnecessary loss of life. It should accurately simulate mission environments, consider local realities, and align with the mission's mandate, Rules of Engagement and UNPOL Directive on the Use of Force specific to the mission.

HANDLING THE APPREHENSION AND DETENTION OF CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES OR ARMED GROUPS

During UN military or police operations, personnel may encounter situations where children associated with armed forces or armed groups are apprehended and placed under the effective control of the UN peacekeeping operations, in accordance with the mission's mandate, Rules of Engagement and Directive on the Use of Force.

Special procedures and safeguards shall be implemented for children apprehended and detained by UN peacekeeping operations to ensure that, in all actions and decisions concerning children, the best interest of the child is the primary consideration. The apprehension and detention of a child shall only be used as a measure of last resort, for the shortest possible period of time, and in accordance with international norms and standards relating to the deprivation of child liberty. At all times, children must be separated from adult detainees, and girls must be separated from boys. Where possible, priority should be given to alternatives to detention.⁷⁶

The Child Protection Section/Unit (or the child protection focal point, where there is no CPS/U) should be immediately informed and consulted on all aspects of detention of children.



It is estimated that thousands of children continue to serve in the ranks of armed forces and armed groups in South Sudan. Photo: UNICEF South Sudan/ 2018

SUPPORTING THE DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION OF CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES OR ARMED GROUPS

Children may leave armed forces and armed groups as part of a formal child disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (child DDR) process, which is typically structured and planned, or through engagement with the party to conflict on an Action Plan to address recruitment and use of children. Child DDR focuses on the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups, regardless of ongoing conflicts or political processes.⁷⁷ Unlike adults, children are not required to hand over weapons or prove familiarity with weapons as a condition for release.⁷⁸

UN peacekeeping operations with DDR mandates often include addressing the needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups. UN uniformed personnel can contribute to this process, working closely with the Child Protection Section/Unit, the DDR Section/Unit, UN agencies, funds and programmes, NGOs, and local authorities to ensure a coordinated approach. While the tasks may vary from mission to mission, they generally include the following:

■ Providing security

- ▶ Securing demobilization sites and conducting patrols to prevent violence or interference with the DDR process.
- ▶ Deploying rapidly in response to emergency situations, such as sudden surges in violence or the unexpected arrivals of large groups of children for demobilization.

■ Facilitating safe passage

- ▶ Coordinating secure transportation and providing military escorts for children and DDR staff in high-risk areas.
- ▶ Establishing safe corridors for the movement of children and DDR staff, ensuring that these routes are free from armed group activity and other threats.

■ Providing logistic support

- ▶ Assisting with logistics planning and coordination for the DDR process, including the movement of supplies, personnel, and children.
- ▶ Setting up and maintaining essential infrastructure at demobilization sites, such as shelters, sanitation facilities, and medical stations. Separate accommodation should be planned for girls and boys.

■ Support community engagement

- ▶ Foster local community support for DDR efforts and address concerns to ensure community acceptance and participation.



Yambio, South Sudan. Release of children from armed group by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in close collaboration with other partners. Photo: UNMISS 2018/Isaac Billy

KEY ACTIONS POINTS FOR MILITARY AND POLICE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

UN military and police personnel may encounter children associated with armed forces or armed groups. Full preparedness to manage such situations in accordance with mission guidelines and child protection standards is crucial.

Upon assignment to serve as the military or police CPFP, key actions include:

- ✓ Ensuring that training on the topic of children associated with armed forces or armed groups equips UN military and police personnel with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage such situations effectively. The training should include scenario-based exercises that reflect local realities and mission-specific protocols, and it should be developed in collaboration with the Integrated Mission Training Centre and the Child Protection Section/Unit to ensure it is comprehensive and contextually relevant.
- ✓ Obtaining copy of the mission-specific standard operating procedure on the handling of detention. Become familiar with the SOP to understand all procedures and guidelines.

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 3, Lesson 3: Military component child protection action and response, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>
- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023), Module 1: Promoting child-friendly interactions with children, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police>.
- Specialized Training Materials for United Nations Police Officers (2021), Lesson 11: Apprehension, arrest and detention in UN peace operations, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/stm/unpol>.
- Standard Operating Procedure on the Handling of Detention in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2020): [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Security/Safety%20and%20Security%20Management/2020.13%20Handling%20of%20Detention%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peacekeeping%20Operations%20and%20Special%20Political%20Missions%20\(SOP\).pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Security/Safety%20and%20Security%20Management/2020.13%20Handling%20of%20Detention%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peacekeeping%20Operations%20and%20Special%20Political%20Missions%20(SOP).pdf)
- UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (2021), Module 5.20: Children and DDR, available at: <https://www.unddr.org/the-iddrs/level-5/Level-5-UN-DDR>.

EXERCISES

Encounters with children associated with armed forces or armed groups present specific challenges for UN uniformed personnel. The exercises accompanying Chapter 6 of the handbook focus on exploring appropriate actions in field scenarios involving children associated with armed forces or armed groups, ensuring that responses prioritize their protection and well-being.



EXERCISE 6.1:

Encountering Children Associated with an Armed Group⁷⁹

Instructions

- Using the scenario provided below, address the following tasks:
 - ▶ Identify possible actions that could be taken during the interaction with the armed group.
 - ▶ Assess the potential consequences of each action.
 - ▶ Determine the preferred course of action as the Company Commander, justifying your decision based on child protection priorities, security considerations and DDR objectives.

- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario

You are a Company Commander. You arrive in a village to meet with the leader of an armed group operating in the area. The purpose of your visit is to discuss the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of members of the armed group.

As you enter the village, you notice several children among the armed group members. Some of these children appear to be no older than 12 years and are carrying weapons. They seem to be integrated into the ranks of the armed group, following orders and participating in activities alongside adult combatants.

After the initial introductions, the leader invites you to his headquarters for a more formal discussion. Inside the headquarters, you observe a boy, about 13 years old, acting as the leader's aide. He is dressed in military fatigues and carrying a rifle. During the conversation, the boy fetches documents, serves refreshments, and occasionally participates in the discussion.

It becomes evident that the boy, along with other children, has been with the armed group for some time. The leader speaks of them with pride, indicating that they are crucial to the group's operations.

GUIDANCE TABLE

The primary dilemma in this scenario is how to address the presence of children within the ranks of the armed group. Balancing the need to protect these children and uphold international law against the necessity of maintaining a cooperative relationship with the leader of the armed group to advance the DDR programme is important. Considerations include the immediate safety of the children, the long-term goals of DDR, and the risk of grave violations against children continuing.		
POSSIBLE ACTION:	REASON FOR CHOOSING IT:	REASON FOR NOT CHOOSING IT:
A: Advocate for the immediate release of the children associated with the armed group.	■ Directly addresses the child protection concern (grave violation) and aligns with international law. ■ Demonstrates a clear stance against the recruitment and use of children by (armed forces and) armed groups.	■ It might endanger the children if the advocacy is perceived as an attack to or criticism of the group leader. ■ It might alienate the group leader and derail the DDR program. ■ It requires careful timing and diplomacy to prevent a possible escalation.

POSSIBLE ACTION:	REASON FOR CHOOSING IT:	REASON FOR NOT CHOOSING IT:
B: Engage in dialogue about child protection.	■ Opens a channel for discussing child protection without immediate confrontation (for example, using neutral, fact-based language). ■ Builds trust and rapport with the group leader (for example, listening to the leader's concerns before engaging in dialogue on child protection). ■ A gradual approach may lead to more sustainable outcomes (e.g., propose releasing the youngest children or ensuring their immediate safety as a gesture of good will) to build momentum.	■ It may be perceived as implicitly condoning the use of children by the armed group, if not accompanied by clear communication about the consequences of violations and abuses against children. ■ Slow progress could mean continued exploitation and harm to the children in the short term. ■ Risk of the dialogue being unproductive if the leader is resistant and unwilling to acknowledge child protection concerns, potentially stalling any meaningful action.
C: Observe and report.	■ Minimizes immediate risks to the children by avoiding actions that could escalate the situation. ■ Provides the chain of command with actionable and accurate information to plan a coordinated response. ■ Creates an opportunity to involve the Child Protection Section/Unit and other relevant stakeholders in a coordinated response	■ Delayed action could lead to further harm to the children. ■ Perceived inaction may undermine the mission's credibility, including with the local community. ■ It might allow the leader of the armed group to prevent further access to the children (for example, by concealing or moving them), making subsequent interventions more difficult.
POSSIBLE PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION:	Engage in dialogue about child protection while observing and reporting; consider advocating for the immediate release of the children, depending on how the dialogue goes. This approach prioritizes the immediate safety of the children, builds trust with the armed group leader, and provides actionable information for coordinated planning with the CPS/U and other stakeholders for follow-up. The goal is to gradually influence the armed group leader towards releasing the children without escalating tensions or jeopardizing the DDR program, while ensuring child protection remains a priority.	



EXERCISE 6.2:

Dealing with the Arrest of Children for Actual or Alleged Association with an Armed Group

Instructions

- Using the scenario provided below, consider how a UNPOL officer should respond to the arrest of children for actual or alleged association with an armed group by the host-State police. Focusing on mentoring and advising the host-State police without assuming an executive role in the process, list five actions a UNPOL officer could take in this situation.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below, which presents a non-exhaustive list of possible actions a UNPOL officer could take, to assess your understanding.

Scenario

You are a UNPOL officer deployed to a United Nations peacekeeping operation. While on a joint patrol with the host-State police, you encounter a group of three children, two girls and one boy, who appear distressed and reluctant to speak. The host-State police suspect the children may be associated with an armed group operating in the area, as they find symbols of the group on their clothing. The host-State police arrest the children on suspicion of being associated with the armed group. They immediately handcuff them and prepare to transport the children to a detention facility for questioning. One of the girls denies the accusation, stating that she was forcibly recruited by the armed group but managed to escape. You notice that the host-State police seem uncertain about how to proceed with handling children in this context.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Possible actions (examples):

- Emphasize that children should be treated primarily as victims.
- Advise the host-State police to relocate the children to a safe area away from public scrutiny or potential threats.
- Advise the host-State police to remove the handcuffs, unless the children pose a threat to themselves or others (the arrest should be carried out in a manner that respects the children's dignity, avoiding excessive force, brutality, or the use of harmful devices).
- Advise the host-State police not to criminalize the children based solely on their actual or alleged association with the armed group.
- Stress the importance of treating the children as innocent until proven guilty.

- Advise the host-State police to use child-friendly techniques in communicating with the children. Reinforce that coercive interviewing methods and techniques designed to obtain a confession through duress, threats or impairment of the child's capacity to make decisions are prohibited.
- Remind the host-State police that detention should be used as a last resort and for the shortest possible time, and that alternatives to detention should be prioritized.
- Remind the host-State police that children should be separated from adults, boys should be separated from girls, and children in conflict with the law should be separated from children in contact with the law.
- Remind the host-State police that children in custody must be offered the opportunity to access a lawyer from the moment they are deprived of liberty, and before any questioning by the authorities.
- Advise the host-State police to contact civilian child protection actors to ensure the children receive necessary assistance, such as medical care and psychosocial support. The Child Protection Section/Unit can assist with identifying the referral pathways.
- Report the incident and actions taken to the appropriate UN channels, including the UNPOL child protection focal point, the Child Protection Section/Unit, and your hierarchical supervisor.
- Maintain communication with the host-State police to monitor actions and outcomes related to the incident.
- When advising the host-State police, stress the importance of being sensitive to gender-specific needs.
- Advise the host-State police to offer the child the opportunity to choose between police officers of different genders.

CHAPTER 7

Safeguarding Children

Child safeguarding is a critical concern within UN peacekeeping operations, involving the identification, prevention, and response to behaviors that could constitute poor practice or abusive conduct. Children in these contexts are particularly vulnerable due to conflict, displacement, and weakened social structures. UN uniformed personnel will often interact directly with these children, witnessing their lack of protection first-hand. The significant power disparity between UN military or police personnel and the children they are mandated to protect underscores the imperative to prioritize and actively engage in safeguarding efforts. It is crucial that UN uniformed personnel never contribute to harm against children. To fulfil this responsibility, UN military and police personnel should:

- **Identify and mitigate behaviors that could be harmful to children.**
- **Adhere to UN standards of conduct and policies prohibiting sexual exploitation and abuse, and the use of child labor.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES WITH CHILDREN

A child refers to any person (girl or boy) below the age of eighteen.⁸⁰ In the absence of evidence that a person is an adult, the general principle is that in case of doubt the presumption of minority is applicable and the person is considered a child.⁸¹

UN uniformed personnel engage in various interactions with children within the mission area. These interactions may occur when performing mandated duties to protect children, or through outreach, community engagement initiatives, and other routine activities. It is crucial that these interactions are approached with awareness of their potential impact on children.

Examples of practices to strictly avoid due to their harmful or abusive nature include:

- Engaging in any relationship with children that could be exploitative or abusive, including romantic or sexual involvement, regardless of the child's age or perceived consent.
- Employing physical punishment, assault, or any violent behavior towards children.
- Engaging in actions that could harm a child's emotional well-being, such as bullying, intimidation, or verbal abuse.
- Using children for purpose of labor or other rendering of services.



Brazilian peacekeepers in Haiti. UN Photo

Maintaining appropriate boundaries with children is an important consideration in child safeguarding. It involves establishing clear, professional relationships that protect the child and minimize the risk of exploitation or abuse. This is a non-exhaustive list of safe interaction principles to guide interactions with children:

- Ensure all interactions with children are focused on their best interests and uphold a professional demeanor.
- Avoid physical contact with children.
- Use age-appropriate language and communicate respectfully. Avoid suggestive or manipulative language that could be misinterpreted.
- Ensure interactions with children are transparent and observable by others (e.g., avoid interactions with children unless another adult is present).

Prohibition Against the Use of Child Labor

The prohibition against the use of child labor includes the following:

- Children (persons under the age of eighteen) cannot be used for any form of labor or rendering of services, regardless of the legal minimum employment age set by the host country. For example, hiring children to work as cooks, cleaners, drivers, or to perform laundry tasks is strictly prohibited.
- The prohibition applies regardless of whether the child is compensated, whether through salary, food, or other benefits. This means that even if a child were to be paid or provided with food, their involvement is still not allowed.

- Children are not allowed to be present on the premises, in camps, or in any facilities associated with UN peace operations for the purpose of labor or rendering of services. For example, children cannot be used to perform any functions on UN premises, such as serving food, cleaning facilities, or performing maintenance work.

Recognize that in some cultures, children may be involved in work as part of family survival strategies. Navigate these cultural contexts sensitively while upholding the prohibition against child labor. Where possible, share this information with the Child Protection Section/Unit or other child protection partners who may be able to offer alternative forms of support to families that rely on child labor, such as connecting them with appropriate programmes or services that can provide assistance without compromising children's rights.

UNITED NATIONS STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The UN standards of conduct apply universally to all civilian and uniformed personnel deployed in UN missions, encompassing three fundamental principles:

- Highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in all actions and responsibilities undertaken.
- Zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, ensuring protection of vulnerable populations, including children.
- Accountability of command and leadership who fail to enforce the standards of conduct, ensuring adherence across all levels.

Adherence to the UN standards of conduct is mandatory for all UN personnel throughout their mission service. Please refer to the UN standards of conduct for further information.⁸²

Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The prohibition against sexual exploitation and abuse against children includes the following:

- Engaging in any sexual activity with children (persons, boys and girls, under the age of eighteen) is prohibited regardless the age of majority or age of consent locally.
- Exchanging money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance.

In addition, military and police personnel have non-fraternization policies making relations with beneficiaries of assistance, including children, a violation of the standards of conduct.

Sexual exploitation and abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal. When allegations of serious misconduct involving military and police personnel are substantiated, the

UN may repatriate the individuals concerned on disciplinary grounds and ban them from future participation in peacekeeping operations. Disciplinary sanctions and any other judicial actions, which may include criminal accountability or civil accountability related to child support, remain the responsibility of the national jurisdiction of the individual involved.⁸³

For more information on the prohibition of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, please refer to the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and related guidance.⁸⁴



*A MONUSCO female peacekeepers calls for an end to sexual exploitation and abuse, 2020.
Photo: MONUSCO.*

SAFEGUARDING CONSIDERATIONS DURING OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

While outreach and community engagement efforts are essential for building relationships and fostering goodwill with local communities, and enhancing mission acceptance, they should not be mistaken for child protection activities that are part of the mission's mandate. Particular care is needed to ensure that outreach and community engagement activities do not inadvertently create security risks or dependencies. Such actions can complicate safeguarding efforts and lead to unintended consequences.



Road patrol through remote areas of Mundri (South Sudan) to assess the security situation in the area, where heavy military presence of government and opposition forces led to teachers and students fleeing the school and unable to return. Photo: 2018, UNMISS/Isaac Billy

When involved in outreach and community engagement activities, UN military and police personnel should consider several safeguarding aspects:

- **Adherence to mandates:** Consult with the CPS/U to confirm that any outreach or community engagement activity aligns with the mission's child protection mandate and does not detract from direct protection efforts.
- **Risk mitigation:** Be aware of potential risks associated with these activities, such as unintentional harm, abuse, or exploitation, and implement measures to mitigate these risks.
- **Safe interaction principles:** Adhere to safe interaction principles to ensure that all interactions with children are conducted in a manner that respects their safety and dignity.
- **Collaboration and oversight:** Work closely with local authorities and child protection actors to ensure that all activities, including direct aid or support, comply with child protection standards and best practices.



Consider what 'do no harm' and 'best interest of the child' mean in the context of outreach and community engagement activities.

Do no harm

In all actions and decisions concerning children, all efforts shall be made to minimize possible negative effects and maximize possible benefits. It is the responsibility of those engaged with children to protect them from harm, as well as ensure that they experience the greatest possible benefits from such involvement.

In this context, 'do no harm' means that, prior to engaging in outreach and community engagement activities, UN uniformed personnel should assess the potential risks arising from such activities in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit. Should an activity pose significant risks to children (e.g., distributing food or gifts directly to children might expose them to harm by creating security risks, dependency, or exploitation by opportunistic actors), UN uniformed personnel should refrain from implementing it, unless sufficient mitigating measures can be adopted (e.g., coordinating distributions through local authorities or child protection organizations).

Best interest of the child

In all actions and decisions concerning children, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration. Assessing the best interest of a child means evaluating and balancing all relevant factors to make a decision in a specific situation for an individual child or group of children.

In this context, the 'best interest of the child' means evaluating how planned outreach and community engagement activities will impact children, ensuring they contribute positively to their well-being and development. For example, organizing a sports activity for children might benefit their social and emotional development by providing recreation and fostering community connections. However, if the activity takes place in an unsafe location (e.g., a site near conflict zones or areas with unexploded ordnance), it could expose children to significant risks. UN uniformed personnel should assess, in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit, whether the location is secure and whether the activity might inadvertently attract risks, such as drawing children to areas that could be targeted by parties to the conflict. Mitigating measures (e.g., selecting a safe and supervised venue in coordination with child protection actors and local communities) should be adopted to ensure the activity serves the best interest of the child.

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY AND POLICE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

As UN uniformed personnel, leading by example and maintaining the highest ethical standards in all interactions with children and communities is essential to setting a positive example for others. Upon deployment to the mission, key actions include:

- ✓ Becoming familiar with the UN's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, especially as it pertains to children.
- ✓ Consulting with the Child Protection Section/Unit regarding mission's existing guidelines for interactions with children to ensure they are up-to-date and comprehensive.

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 3, Lesson 1: Interacting with children, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>.
- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023), Module 1: Promoting child-friendly interactions with children, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police>.

EXERCISES

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) are designed to benefit local communities, while establishing and building confidence in the UN peacekeeping operation and its mandate, improving the environment for effective mandate implementation. These initiatives may focus on areas such as access to clean water, education, and other essential services, with particular attention to the needs of women and children. The exercise accompanying Chapter 7 of the handbook focuses on identifying child safeguarding risks and mitigating measures to ensure that child protection considerations are integrated into QIP planning and implementation.



EXERCISE 7.1:

Integrating Child Protection into Quick Impact Projects: A Risk Assessment Activity

Instructions

- Using the case study provided below, address the following tasks:
 - ▶ Identify what contact UN military personnel might have with children during the implementation of these activities.
 - ▶ Identify potential safeguarding risks to children related to these activities.

- Outline steps to mitigate these risks, ensuring that child protection is prioritized throughout the process.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Situation: The UN military component is planning Quick Impact Projects to support a local community by building wells to provide easier access to clean water and by repairing the local school to improve children's access to education.

Task: The Force headquarters child protection focal point is tasked with advising the UN Civil-Military Coordination Branch (U/G/S-9) on integrating child protection considerations into these activities. The objective is to prioritize child protection and minimize risks to children.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Contact with children:
■ Direct interaction: Children may be present at the construction sites of the wells and the school, especially if these projects are in or near their communities. They might observe the work or interact with UN military personnel. Repairing the school might include interactions with children during school visits to understand their needs or gather input for the project. ■ Community engagement: Children may be involved in community meetings or information sessions related to the project, either directly or as part of a family group.
Potential safeguarding risks:
■ Security risks: Unauthorized access or insufficient security measures at the project sites could lead to potential security threats, including incidents of theft or violence that could affect children. ■ Safety hazards: Construction sites can pose physical risks such as accidents, injuries from machinery, or exposure to hazardous materials. ■ Exploitation risks: There is a risk that children could be used for labor.
Mitigation measures:
■ Enhanced security and safety measures: Implement security measures such as fencing, regular patrols, clear barriers, signage, and restricted access to construction site. These actions will prevent unauthorized access, ensure children's safety and protect them from exposure to hazardous areas.

- **Child safeguarding awareness:** Ensure all UN military personnel are aware about the importance of child safeguarding, including the prohibitions on sexual exploitation and abuse, the prohibition of child labor, and how to avoid inappropriate interactions.
- **Community awareness:** Engage with community leaders, civil society organizations, parents and teachers to inform them about the project and the associated risks, ensuring they are aware of how to keep their children safe.
- **Reporting channels:** Establish channels for children and their families to voice concerns or report any issues related to the project, ensuring prompt and appropriate responses to any safeguarding issues that arise.

2

PART 2: Child Protection Tasks of the United Nations Military Component

The tasks outlined in part 1 of this handbook apply to both military and police components of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Part 2 specifically addresses the responsibilities and child protection tasks of the military component.

CHAPTER 8

Engaging with Parties to the Conflict on the Protection of Children

Engaging with parties to the conflict on child protection concerns is a crucial aspect of the United Nations' efforts to protect children. The UN peacekeeping operation's approach to this engagement is comprehensive and multifaceted, addressing ongoing grave violations against children while also establishing long-term protection and prevention strategies. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism is a tool enabling systematic and constructive engagement with parties to the conflict.⁸⁵ The mission mandates may explicitly call for this engagement, providing the necessary authority and political space to interact with all parties to the conflict who perpetrate grave violations against children without any implications as to their political or legal status.

Under the overall responsibility of the Head of Mission, this engagement is led by the Child Protection Section/Unit. Engagement may involve bilateral interactions to secure commitments from parties to the conflict on Action Plans or other unilateral commitments aimed at ending and preventing these violations. It could also include negotiating and implementing protocols for the protection and transfer of children associated with armed forces or armed groups to civilian authorities. Additionally, the engagement may encompass training and capacity-building, advocacy, and awareness-raising. UN military personnel have an integral role in supporting some of these efforts. To undertake these tasks effectively, UN military personnel should:

- **Stay informed about the Child Protection Section/Unit's engagement efforts with parties to the conflict, including Action Plans or other commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children, to effectively support these initiatives.**
- **Coordinate with the Child Protection Section/Unit to align security arrangements with engagement strategies, to ensure a safe and secure environment for dialogues and negotiations with parties to the conflict.**
- **Coordinate with the Child Protection Section/Unit to ensure consistent messaging in advocacy and awareness-raising efforts with parties to conflict on ceasing grave violations against children.**
- **Coordinate with the Child Protection Section/Unit to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to training and capacity-building on child protection.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

SUPPORTING ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT ON CHILD PROTECTION

Engaging with parties to the conflict on child protection concerns is a complex process that must be responsive to the political and security context, ensuring that all actions contribute to the mission's broader objectives. The UN military component plays a critical role in supporting this engagement in several ways.

UN military personnel, in particular commanding officers, play a key role in advocacy and awareness-raising with parties to the conflict. By building trust and clearly communicating the mission's presence and intentions, they can foster constructive dialogue that promotes international child protection norms and standards. This approach encourages parties to the conflict to view compliance as part of broader conflict de-escalation and improved relations with local communities.

Building trust reduces resistance and suspicion, making advocacy efforts more effective while emphasizing the legal and moral consequences of violations against children, including accountability for grave violations. Engagement must consider the complexities of the conflict, particularly how liaising with armed groups may affect relationships with the host government, other parties, and perceptions of impartiality.

Effective engagement also depends on cooperation from local communities. Through transparent and consistent engagement with community leaders and local actors, UN military personnel can build public confidence, involve communities in child protection efforts, and enhance collaboration, preventing misunderstandings that could undermine mission objectives.

Additionally, outreach to communities can advance the mission's political goals by empowering local actors to advocate for the protection of children and discourage violations by parties to the conflict. Insights gathered from these engagements, including information about local dynamics, can help inform negotiations and promote compliance with international child protection norms and standards.

UN military personnel can support civilian child protection staff by ensuring a secure environment for dialogues and negotiations with parties to the conflict. UN military presence can function as a stabilizing factor and deterrent to potential threats allowing negotiations, whether focused on the release of children or broader child protection concerns, to proceed. However, always be mindful of the specific circumstances in the area of operations and consult with the Child Protection Section/Unit regarding the role that the UN military should (or should not) play on a case-by-case basis.

COORDINATING ADVOCACY, AWARENESS-RAISING, TRAINING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS WITH THE CHILD PROTECTION SECTION/UNIT

To effectively address grave violations against children, advocacy, awareness-raising, and capacity-building efforts must be well-coordinated and aligned with the mission's broader objectives and political priorities. UN military personnel should work closely with the Child Protection Section/Unit to ensure clear, consistent messaging and

targeted training initiatives that build the capacity of parties to the conflict to comply with international child protection norms and standards. Key considerations include:

- **Ensure clarity and consistency:** Align messaging with the mission's child protection priorities, delivering clear, authoritative messages and avoiding mixed signals.
- **Align with the mission's objectives:** Focus advocacy, awareness-raising, training, and capacity-building efforts on the most relevant child protection issues.
- **Facilitate clear communication:** Deliver consistent and direct messaging to help parties to the conflict understand and respond appropriately to child protection concerns.
- **Promote unified efforts:** Coordinate with the CPS/U and other mission components to ensure that all personnel involved in advocacy on child protection deliver coherent and consistent messages, working toward common goals.
- **Enhance training and capacity-building:** Work with the CPS/U to design and deliver targeted training and capacity-building initiatives for parties to the conflict, addressing grave violations and fostering compliance with international norms and standards.
- **Overcome resistance and confusion:** Use consistent messaging to set clear expectations, reduce resistance and address misunderstandings among parties to the conflict the mission engages with.
- **Reinforce international norms and standards:** Emphasize the consequences of non-compliance with international child protection norms and standards through coordinated messaging and training efforts.
- **Adapt to evolving contexts:** Maintain regular coordination with the CPS/U to adapt messaging and training to remain responsive to evolving operational environments.

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

Military CPFs benefit from staying informed about both the listed parties to the conflict and those engaged in dialogue on Action Plans and other unilateral commitments addressing grave violations against children in the host country. Key actions include:

- ✓ Keeping updated on the latest status of Action Plans that have been signed and are being implemented (<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/action-plans/>). This information is crucial to understand the current commitments and progress made by parties in addressing grave violations against children.
- ✓ During the initial briefing with the Senior Child Protection Adviser and/or civilian child protection staff upon assignment to serve as the CPF, enquiring about the progress on these Action Plans or other commitments. Focus on understanding

the milestones achieved, challenges faced, and identifying areas where the support of the UN military may be needed.

- ✓ Keeping abreast of the armed actors active within the area of responsibility and coordinating with the Child Protection Section/Unit to ensure engagement efforts align with mission objectives and avoid unintended negative implications.

Military CPFPs would also benefit from keeping abreast of other developments, such as:

- ✓ Sanctions Regimes established by the UN Security Council (<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/information>), including their forms (e.g., economic and trade sanctions, arms embargoes, travel bans) and the goals they pursue (e.g. promote non-proliferation, protect human rights, deter non-constitutional changes), focusing in particular on Sanctions Regimes concerning the host country.
- ✓ Status of the Action Plans to address conflict-related sexual violence that have been signed and are being implemented, focusing in particular on the host country (<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/digital-library/joint-communiques/>). Consider liaising with the mission's Senior Women Protection Advisor to be briefed on the latest developments.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Checklist: UN Military Support During Engagements with Parties to the Conflict on Violations and Abuses against Children

Engagement with parties to the conflict on child protection requires careful planning, effective coordination, and a deep understanding of the political and operational context. This checklist provides practical guidance to ensure that all efforts, whether advocacy, awareness-raising, training, and capacity-building, or security measures, are effectively implemented to support these engagements.

Key aspects to consider		Checklist
1	Support dialogue process	☐ Ensure a visible presence to deter potential disruptions and maintain a secure environment for dialogues. Depending on the circumstances, this might include positioning military personnel at engagement sites to provide reassurance to participants and discourage any hostile actions. The presence should be managed to remain non-intimidating, fostering an atmosphere conducive to open dialogue. Decisions on the opportunity of such presence should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit.

Key aspects to consider		Checklist
1	Support dialogue process	☐ Facilitate communication between civilian child protection staff and parties to the conflict, if and when required. This may involve acting as an intermediary to help clarify positions and concerns, thereby promoting constructive dialogue and understanding. ☐ Help ensure that scheduled engagements proceed without disruptions to maintain trust and progress between parties.
2	Coordinate security arrangements	☐ Work closely with the CPS/U to align security arrangements with their engagement strategies. This collaboration involves participating in joint planning sessions, sharing information on potential threats, and adapting security protocols to support the specific needs and objectives of child protection initiatives. ☐ Identify and mitigate risks of violence before and during engagements to preserve the safety and integrity of the dialogue process.
3	Promote compliance with Action Plans	☐ Support civilian child protection staff in monitoring adherence to Action Plans by providing necessary security during site visits, if and when required. This includes ensuring safe access to barracks, military training centers, or camps controlled by the party to conflict as well as coordinating with local security forces to mitigate potential risks.
4	Facilitate access and movement	☐ Assist with logistics for the safe movement of child protection staff and other key personnel to and from engagement sites. ☐ Provide security and logistical support for the safe release and transfer of children from armed forces or armed groups to child protection actors, if and when required.
5	Advocate and raise awareness	☐ Reinforce messages on child protection and adherence to international norms and standards with parties to the conflict, as guided by civilian child protection staff. This may involve conducting face-to-face meetings to discuss these issues and distributing informational materials, as needed. ☐ Support the integration of child protection into community engagement efforts by collaborating with community leaders, civil society, and local organizations to raise awareness about child protection issues, including the role of communities in protecting children.
6	Train and build capacity of host-State armed forces	☐ Support the CPS/U in designing and delivering training to host-State armed forces on their responsibilities in protecting children.

TABLE 15: Checklist: UN military support during engagements with parties to the conflict on violations and abuses against children

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), Chapter 6: Engaging with Parties to Conflict, and Chapter 8: Prevention: [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/core-peacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/core-peacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf)

EXERCISES

The UN military component plays an important role in supporting the complex and sensitive task of engaging parties to the conflict on child protection issues. The exercise accompanying Chapter 8 of the handbook focuses on the role of UN military personnel in supporting child protection efforts during engagements with a non-State armed group involved in the recruitment and use of children.



EXERCISE 8.1: **Engaging a Non-State Armed Group on Recruitment and Use of Children**

Instructions

- Using the scenario provided, reflect on the responsibilities of UN military personnel in facilitating a safe and effective engagement, specifically:
 - ▶ Collaborating with civilian child protection staff to prepare for the engagement.
 - ▶ Supporting the dialogue process while ensuring civilian leadership remains central.
 - ▶ Engaging local communities to enhance the success of the dialogue.
 - ▶ Ensuring a secure environment for the dialogue.
 - ▶ Supporting the implementation of commitments made by the armed group.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario

A non-State armed group operating in your area of responsibility is actively recruiting and using children. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Cornelius, the mission's Senior Child Protection Adviser, initiates dialogue with the group to secure the release of the children currently associated with it and to convince its leadership to cease recruitment and use of children.

Ahead of the meeting, Cornelius collaborates with the Sector Commander and engages with local community leaders to gather insights into the group's dynamics and the community's perceptions. Cornelius arranges a meeting with the group's leader, accompanied by the Sector Commander, who ensures a secure environment for the engagement.

During the meeting, Cornelius leads the discussion, emphasizing the importance of child protection, and the consequences of continued recruitment and use of children. After a series of intense discussions, Cornelius convinces the leader of the armed group to make concrete commitments. The leader agrees to halt all recruitment and use of children and to release those already associated with the group.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Collaborating with civilian child protection staff to prepare for the engagement.

Examples:

- Coordinate with the Child Protection Section/Unit to discuss the security arrangements and logistical support needed for the engagement.
- Share insights on the operational environment, including updates on armed group activity in the area and local dynamics, to inform the preparation process.
- Discuss with the Child Protection Section/Unit whether the direct involvement of UN military personnel, in particular commanding officers, in advocacy and awareness-raising with the armed group can be helpful/warranted.
- Jointly review objectives and messaging to ensure a unified approach to advocacy and awareness-raising with the armed group.

Supporting the dialogue process while ensuring civilian leadership remain central.

Examples:

- Coordinate with the Child Protection Section/Unit to agree on the role UN military personnel might play during the meeting (e.g., maintain a discreet presence during the meeting, staying in the background to provide security while the civilian child protection staff lead the dialogue).
- Provide real-time security updates to the Child Protection Section/Unit to ensure the dialogue proceeds smoothly.

Engaging local communities to enhance the success of the dialogue.

Examples:

- In collaboration with the Child Protection Section/Unit, the military CPFP, and other relevant mission components, conduct sensitization sessions for community members to raise awareness about the impact of grave violations on children and the importance of child protection.
- Engage with local leaders, community members and civil society organizations to gather insights into the armed group's dynamics, community perceptions and factors that could influence the armed group's willingness to agree to and subsequently implement commitments.

Ensuring a secure environment for the dialogue.

Examples:

- Conduct a risk assessment of the meeting location and surrounding areas to identify potential threats. Develop contingency plans to address potential disruptions, such as unforeseen threats or delays. ■ Secure access routes for the Child Protection Section/Unit, ensuring safe movements to and from the engagement area.
- Deploy military personnel to provide security without creating an intimidating atmosphere, ensuring the environment is conducive to dialogue.

Supporting the implementation of commitments made by the armed group.

Examples:

- Provide security for civilian child protection teams monitoring compliance by the armed group with their commitments.
- Maintain communication with the armed group to reinforce the importance of adhering to their commitments under international law.



A MONUSCO team travels to South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, to secure the commitment of an armed group commander not to recruit children. Photo: MONUSCO Child Protection Section

CHAPTER 9

Child Protection Considerations in Military Planning and Operations

The UN military component plays a crucial role in providing physical protection, minimizing threats, and reducing children's vulnerabilities in hostile environments, in close coordination with civilian child protection actors. Integrating child protection considerations into every stage of military planning and operations — from initial assessments and the development of courses of action, to tactical execution and after-action reviews — is essential.⁸⁶ By making child protection a core consideration in military planning and operations, the potential harm to children, whether caused by the mission or by other actors, can be prevented or significantly reduced. To effectively contribute to child protection in planning and operations, UN military personnel should:

- **Maintain situational awareness to identify and understand risks and threats to children within the operational environment.**
- **Conduct threat assessments in areas of responsibility (in coordination with other actors) and prioritize risk mitigation measures to address the highest priority risks to children.**
- **Incorporate child protection considerations into the planning, execution, and review of tactical-level military tasks to prevent or at least minimize harm to children.**
- **Integrate child protection considerations into contingency plans to manage unforeseen scenarios that could impact children.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND CHILD PROTECTION

Situational awareness is vital for child protection efforts in UN peacekeeping operations. UN military personnel should develop a comprehensive understanding of the specific risks and threats faced by children within the operational environment. This involves maintaining situational awareness through assessments to identify and analyze particular risks and threats to children in the different areas of responsibility.

Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence (U/G/S-2) personnel are crucial to this process as they are responsible for continuously updating the analysis of the operating environment, particularly during military operations. This ongoing analysis helps to maintain accurate situational awareness and informs other branches of emerging threats and changes in the environment.



The Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection PLAN-ACT-ALERT-PROTECT

Plan: The Force must proactively prevent grave violations against children, considering the impact of conflict on children, and implementing contingency plans to mitigate risks. Operations should be based on early warning indicators to protect children and target perpetrators.

Act: When a child faces the risk of death, serious harm, or other grave violations, immediate action must be taken to protect the child, subject to operational considerations and the Rules of Engagement.

Alert: After responding to an imminent threat or when prevention is not possible or the threat is not imminent, alert the relevant military CPFP following the established information-sharing and reporting channel. The FHQ CPFP must be informed and will coordinate further actions with the Child Protection Section/ Unit.

Protect: Collect lessons learned, information about early warning indicators, and best practices continuously. Conduct after-action reviews to enhance future responses to child protection incidents.

CHILD PROTECTION THREAT ASSESSMENTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Physical threats to children can stem from various actors, including non-State armed groups, criminal gangs, extremist groups, and State actors such as military, paramilitary, and other entities with criminal, political, or ideological motivations. In UN peacekeeping operations, the threat assessment is a critical component of military planning. It requires the identification, evaluation, and prioritization of risks within the operational environment. Both direct and indirect threats to children must be analyzed for their likelihood and potential impact. Effective threat assessment involves responding to identified risks as well as proactively preventing harm through the use of early warning indicators.

Military Planning (U/G/S-5) personnel should ensure that child protection considerations are integrated into all planning processes, including the development of contingency plans (CONPLANS). They should ensure that CONPLANS address potential risks to children and include specific measures to mitigate these risks.

Military Operations (U/G/S-3) personnel responsible for managing current operations should ensure that operational plans are executed in a manner that prevents or at least minimizes harm to children. This includes assessing potential risks to children arising from the actions of UN military personnel and implementing risk mitigation measures during operations, while ensuring that the strategies outlined in CONPLANS are effectively applied to protect children.

These planning and operational efforts should be closely coordinated with the Force headquarters child protection focal point and the Child Protection Section/ Unit to ensure alignment with current child protection standards and requirements.

Key Considerations for Child Protection in Threat Assessments and Risk Analyses

Conducting threat assessments and risk analyses with a focus on protecting children in situations of armed conflict requires a systematic approach to identifying, assessing, and prioritizing risks. This process involves understanding the operational environment, analyzing potential threats, and assessing vulnerabilities among children and communities. Integrating early warning indicators and considering gender-related risks will enhance the accuracy and inclusivity of the analysis, ensuring the appropriate strategies can be developed to mitigate these risks in the context of military operations.

To assist in this process, a detailed table at the end of this chapter offers additional guidance on incorporating child protection considerations into threat assessments and risk analyses within military operations.

MANAGING THE IMPACT OF UN MILITARY OPERATIONS ON CHILDREN: PLANNING AND EXECUTION CONSIDERATIONS

UN peacekeeping missions must address potential risks to children resulting from military operations, whether unilateral or planned and executed jointly with non-UN security forces. Force Commander's Directives on Child Protection stipulate that UN military personnel must protect children before, during, and after these operations by implementing risk mitigation measures and contingency plans (CONPLANS) that address both direct and indirect effects on children.

Before initiating military operations: Conduct a risk assessment to evaluate how the operation might impact children, both directly and indirectly. Direct effects might include exposure to violence, child casualties, separation from caregivers, or displacement due to military activities. Also, anticipate the possibility of encounters with children associated with armed forces and armed groups. Indirect effects could involve disruptions to essential services like education and healthcare that can increase children's vulnerabilities. Develop and implement tailored risk mitigation measures to address these potential impacts, such as establishing no-fire zones around schools and hospitals, ensuring that humanitarian corridors are respected, and strictly adhering to the prohibition to use schools or hospitals for military purposes.

Operational planning: Scrutinize every aspect of the military operation for its potential impact on children. This includes evaluating the timing, location, and methods of the operation. Operations near schools, hospitals, or residential areas pose higher risks to children. Special attention should be given to areas where children are likely to be, such as schools, playgrounds, or refugee/IDP camps. Ensure compliance with

international law and mission-specific Rules of Engagement to protect children, including the prohibition against using schools or hospitals for military activities.

Tactical execution: Brief military units on the presence of children in the area, including those associated with parties to the conflict. Adjust operation timelines to avoid periods when children are more vulnerable, such as during school hours or high civilian movement times.

Continuous monitoring: Once an operation is underway, continuously monitor its impact on children to ensure it aligns with anticipated outcomes. If new risks to children are identified, make immediate adjustments to operational plans, potentially altering the scope, timing, or tactics of the operation to prevent or minimize harm. Conduct an after-action review to assess the impact on children, including identifying any unintended consequences. Use these insights to refine future planning and operations based on lessons learned and document good practices, if any.

Coordination and reporting: Coordinate with military CPFPs, the Child Protection Section/Unit, and other relevant protection actors throughout the planning and execution phases. They can provide valuable insights and recommendations to prevent or minimize risks to children. The military CPFPs should assist in monitoring the impact of operations on children and share information on grave violations encountered with the Child Protection Section/Unit through the established information-sharing and reporting channels.

Contingency Planning and Child Protection

While risk assessments address known and anticipated threats, contingency plans (CONPLANS) provide a structured approach for managing unforeseen events that could impact children, including scenarios where the use of force is required. Incorporating child protection considerations into CONPLANS involves anticipating potential disruptions or harm that could increase children's vulnerabilities and pose specific risks during military operations. Such disruptions may include sudden escalations in violence, unexpected movements of parties to the conflict, unplanned shifts in operational areas, and breakdowns in communication.

For instance, sudden increases in violence may necessitate the use of force to protect civilians. It is crucial that UN military personnel have measures in place to mitigate potential direct harm to children during such escalations. Similarly, if parties to the conflict unexpectedly move into civilian areas or if there is an unplanned shift in operational areas, this can pose significant risks to children. CONPLANS should include adaptive strategies for responding to such unforeseen movements or changes in operational focus. Additionally, communication failures can increase the risk of misidentification or wrongful detention of children by UN military personnel during military operations.

To address these risks effectively, CONPLANS must incorporate proactive measures, including:

- Coordinating with the Child Protection Section/Unit and other protection and humanitarian actors to ensure military operations consider child protection priorities, helping to prevent such operations from exacerbating risks to children.
- Ensuring tactical adjustments account for evolving child-specific risks, adapting to new threats and circumstances as they arise.
- Maintaining operational flexibility to halt or modify operations if children are identified as being at immediate risk.
- Regularly reviewing and updating CONPLANS to integrate child protection considerations and respond to evolving threats.

By implementing these measures, CONPLANS can effectively address unforeseen events and ensure that the protection of children remains a priority, even in situations where the use of force is required.

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

Military CPFs are responsible for supporting the integration of child protection considerations into the planning and execution of UN military operations. Key actions include:

- ✓ Working closely with UN military counterparts at the Force headquarters and Sector (Brigade) headquarters, such as the planning branch (U/G/S-5) and operations branch (U/G/S-3), to ensure child protection measures are incorporated into all operational planning and execution.
- ✓ Becoming familiar with the Force Commander's Directive on Children Protection and ensure that it is implemented into all planning and operational activities.
- ✓ Understand the mission-specific Rules of Engagement. Understanding how to apply them in various scenarios to protect children.
- ✓ Review and understand relevant CONPLANS that involve child protection scenarios.

In addition, upon assignment to serve as the CPFP, the FHQ CPFP should check for any mission-specific guidelines on protecting schools and hospitals during military operations. If such guidelines are not available, the FHQ CPFP should support the development of these guidelines in consultation with the Child Protection Section/Unit.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Protection of Schools and Hospitals from Military Use

UN military personnel must not use schools, hospitals or any other recognizable education facility or medical facility for any military purposes or interfere with their normal operations.⁸⁷ Adherence to these guidelines is crucial during all military operations, in line with the Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017).

Planning and Conducting Operations

Integration in planning:

- Military units must incorporate measures to avoid impacting educational and medical facilities in their planning. This involves conducting thorough risk assessments to identify potential threats and vulnerabilities and developing strategies to prevent or mitigate identified risks. Establish operational guidelines to ensure these facilities are protected, including avoiding proximity and implementing no-go zones around them.

Risk Mitigation Strategies

Risk assessment:

- **Identify threats and vulnerabilities:** Conduct risk assessments to identify potential threats and vulnerabilities to educational and medical facilities. Evaluate how different military actions, such as troop movements and equipment positioning, could impact these facilities.
- **Analyze operational plans:** Review operational plans to determine potential risks to educational and medical facilities. Assess scenarios where operations might inadvertently affect these sites and develop contingency plans to address them.

Mitigation measures:

- **Adjust areas of operations:** Modify operational plans to ensure military activities are conducted at a safe distance from educational and medical facilities to reduce risks of harm or disruption in situations where military presence or operations are required nearby, and there is a need for flexibility to respond to security threats while minimizing risks to sensitive areas.
- **Implement no-go zones:** Designate and enforce areas where military presence and activities are strictly prohibited under any circumstances. No-go zones are necessary when the area being protected requires absolute neutrality and safety, and any military presence or activity could undermine its status as a protected space. Clearly define these zones, mark them as necessary, and ensure all personnel are aware of and adhere to these restrictions

Monitor and adapt plans:

- **Continuous monitoring:** Regularly monitor the impact of military operations on educational and medical facilities. Use real-time information to adjust operational plans and prevent or mitigate any emerging risks.
- **Report:** Use the established reporting and information-sharing channel to report any concerns or risks affecting educational and medical facilities.

Additional Guidelines on the Protection of Schools

- Schools must not be used for military purposes at any time, including after hours, weekends, and holidays. Only in situations of self-defense or under extenuating circumstances of military necessity, where no viable alternative exists, should a school be used for military efforts. In such cases, the use should be strictly limited to the duration necessary to achieve the required military advantage.
- UN military personnel securing schools should avoid entering the premises to maintain their civilian status and minimize interactions with children.
- If UN military personnel occupy school premises, vacate them promptly to allow for the resumption of educational activities.
- Abandoned schools occupied by UN military personnel should also be vacated immediately. Remove military signs and repair any damage before returning the premises to host-State authorities.
- Ensure all weapons, ammunitions and unexploded ordnance are cleared from the site.

TABLE 16: Protection of schools or hospitals from military use

B. Guiding Points for Threat Assessment and Risk Analysis in Child Protection

GUIDING POINTS FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND RISK ANALYSIS

1. Assess the operational environment

Continuously gather and analyze information about the operational environment to identify risks to children.

- What are the political, security and conflict dynamics in the area of operation, and how might they affect children? Are there different impacts for boys and girls?
- Who are the parties to the conflict that are active in the area, and what are their known activities and capabilities? Do they have a record of violations and abuses against children?
- How do social, economic, and cultural factors impact children, and are there gender differences?
- How does the physical terrain impact access and security for children?

- Are there specific locations where children are concentrated (e.g., schools, refugee/IDP camps, and protection of civilians sites) and what risks do these areas present?
- How do factors such as ongoing hostilities, proximity to conflict zones, or the presence of unexploded ordnance increase risks to children?

2. Maintain situational awareness

Monitor changes in the operational environment and adjust military plans and actions to mitigate emerging risks to children.

- What emerging trends or changes in the conflict may increase risks to children?
- Are emerging threats disproportionately affecting boys or girls?
- How do shifts in the political, social, or security contexts affect children's vulnerabilities?
- Are current military strategies and responses addressing these changes effectively?

3. Assess threats

Assess the intentions and capabilities of parties to the conflict to harm children, focusing on incidents and patterns of violations and abuses.

- What are the intentions and capabilities of parties to the conflict targeting children, and how do these differ for boys and girls?
- What violations and abuses have occurred recently, and how do they reflect ongoing risks to children?
- How do factors like timing, locations, terrain, and weather affect the threat level to children?

4. Conduct vulnerability assessment

Identify vulnerable children in conflict zones and assess how several factors contribute to their exposure to harm.

- Which children and communities are most vulnerable, and how do factors such as gender, displacement, and social dynamics influence their risk?
- Are there specific protection gaps (e.g., girls at risk of exploitation or boys vulnerable to recruitment)?

5. Perform risk analysis

Assess the likelihood and impact of child-related risks.

- What is the likelihood of each threat impacting children, and how does gender influence this likelihood?
- What is the capacity of host-State authorities and other protection actors to address these risks?
- How do historical patterns of violations and abuses against children guide current military planning and protection efforts?

6. Determine risk levels

Categorize risks based on their likelihood and impact on children.

- Which risks are classified as high, medium, or low, and how does gender influence these categorizations?
- How should military resources be allocated based on these risk levels?
- Are current protection mechanisms and community-based protection networks effective in mitigating these risks?

7. Identify priority risks

Focus on risks with the highest likelihood and most severe impacts on children, prioritizing immediate military action.

- Which risks have the most likelihood and impact on children?
- What are the most significant gender-specific risks requiring immediate military action?
- Which protection gaps need urgent attention and action?

8. Develop risk mitigation plans

Develop risk mitigation strategies, including gender-specific protection measures, to address high-priority risks to children.

- What strategies can be developed to mitigate the high-priority risks to children?
- What gender-specific protective measures are needed for boys and girls?
- How can coordination with local and international child protection partners be improved to address these risks effectively?

9. Monitor and adapt to emerging threats

Regularly update assessments and adjust strategies to account for new or changing threats in the operational environment.

- What new or evolving risks have emerged, and how do they affect boys and girls differently?
- How should military plans and strategies adapt to address gaps in child protection?

TABLE 17: Guiding points for threat assessment and risk analysis on child protection

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military (2023), Module 3, Lesson 2: Military component child protection roles and tasks, and Lesson 3: Military component child protection action and response, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-military>.
- Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), Chapter 8: Prevention, and Annex 5B: Sample Directive on the Protection of Schools and Universities against Military Use: [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf)
- Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces (2013): [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Human%20Rights/Human%20Rights%20Due%20Diligence%20Policy%20Final.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Human%20Rights/Human%20Rights%20Due%20Diligence%20Policy%20Final.pdf).

EXERCISES

In UN peacekeeping operations, military operations often take place in dynamic and unpredictable environments, where unforeseen developments can heighten risks, particularly for vulnerable populations like children. Effective contingency planning is essential to mitigate these risks and ensure the protection of children during military operations. The exercise accompanying Chapter 9 of the handbook focuses on integrating child protection considerations into contingency planning to enhance preparedness for unforeseen situations and improve the effectiveness of responses in protecting children.



EXERCISE 9.1: **Integrating Child Protection into Contingency Plans**

Instructions

- Select two to five questions from the list provided below to reflect on how to address unforeseen events during military operations while ensuring the protection of children.
- Based on your reflections, identify key actions to integrate child protection considerations into contingency plans (CONPLANS).
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Questions

- Why is it important to anticipate scenarios where children might be at risk during military operations?
- How can identifying these scenarios in advance influence the effectiveness of your CONPLANS?
- How can flexibility in tactical adjustments help minimize risks to children?
- Can you think of situations where being inflexible might have worsened the outcome for children?
- Why is coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit and other protection/humanitarian actors important when planning military operations?
- How can this coordination be reflected in CONPLANS?
- Why is it necessary to regularly review and update CONPLANS with child protection considerations in mind?
- How can lessons learned from past operations inform these updates, particularly in scenarios involving the use of force?
- Why is it important to ensure child protection training for UN military personnel include scenarios based on actual cases or potential situations in the mission area, preparing them for actual challenges in the field?

GUIDANCE TABLE

Anticipating potential scenarios 1. Why is it important to anticipate scenarios where children might be at risk during military operations? 2. How can identifying these scenarios in advance influence the effectiveness of your CONPLANS? Identifying potential scenarios where children might be at risk during military operations helps prepare for and prevent (or at least mitigate) these risks. Risks could include direct harm from military activities, recruitment or use by parties to the conflict, or separation from parents/caregivers. Identifying such scenarios in advance allows for integrating measures to address the risks facing children into the planning and execution of military operations (e.g., prepare for the possible evacuation of injured children). <i>Action:</i> Develop CONPLANS for potential scenarios in advance. For each identified scenario, outline specific steps to protect children and integrate these measures into the plans.
Flexible tactical adjustments 1. How can flexibility in tactical adjustments help minimize risks to children? 2. Can you think of situations where being inflexible might have worsened the outcome for children?

Flexibility in tactical decisions during military operations allows to adapt quickly to shifting risks to children.

Action: Ensure that CONPLANS allow for immediate tactical adjustments such as modifying operations, halting actions, or deploying additional protection measures if children are identified as being at risk.

Coordination with CPS/U and other protection actors

1. Why is coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit and other protection/humanitarian actors important when planning military operations?
2. How can this coordination be reflected in CONPLANS?

Uncoordinated efforts during military operations may lead to overlapping actions or protection gaps, including for children. Coordination with the Child Protection Section/Unit and other protection/humanitarian actors ensures that specific risks to children are recognized and addressed, and timely assistance is provided.

Action: Define roles and coordination mechanisms with the Child Protection Section/Unit and other protection/humanitarian actors in CONPLANS. Ensure their input is integrated into operational planning and response strategies.

Continuous review and update of CONPLANS

1. Why is it necessary to regularly review and update CONPLANS with child protection considerations in mind?
2. How can lessons learned from past operations inform these updates, particularly in scenarios involving the use of force?

Changes in the operational environment require updates to contingency plans. As risks to children evolve (e.g., new armed groups emerge or conditions in civilian areas shift), outdated plans may fail to account for emerging child-specific risks.

Action: Review and update CONPLANS regularly, incorporating new information, lessons learned from past operations and ongoing assessments of child-related risks.

Child protection training

1. Why is it important to ensure child protection training for UN military personnel include scenarios based on actual cases or potential situations in the mission area, preparing them for actual challenges in the field?

Training equips UN military personnel with the necessary knowledge and tools to address child-specific risks in high-pressure environments. Without proper training, there is a risk of inadvertently harming children or failing to recognize situations where child protection should be prioritized.

Action: Integrate scenarios based on actual cases or potential situations in the mission area, including use of force situations, into training. Ensure that personnel understand their roles, can act quickly and effectively under pressure, and identify any gaps in CONPLANS, allowing time to refine tactics and procedures.



Brazilian peacekeepers with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) patrol Cité Soleil in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. UN Photo

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PART 3: Child Protection Tasks of the United Nations Police Component

The tasks outlined in Part 1 of this handbook apply to both military and police components of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Part 3 specifically addresses the responsibilities and child protection tasks of the police component.

CHAPTER 10

Child Protection Considerations in Police Planning and Operations

Depending on the mandate provided by the Security Council, the UN Police component, may build and develop host-State police capacity, or act as a substitute or partial substitute for host-State police in UN peacekeeping operations.⁸⁸ Efforts focus on preventing and detecting crime, protecting life and property, and maintaining public order and safety. Through capacity-building, training, and the use of community-oriented policing, the UN Police address serious crimes, including those impacting children in conflict-affected areas.

UNPOL must integrate child protection considerations into their planning and operations. To this end, effective collaboration with UN military personnel, the Child Protection Section/Unit, and host-State counterparts (as conditions permit) is critical to strengthen the mission's child protection efforts and ensure a cohesive approach to addressing the risks and threats that children face.

To effectively contribute to child protection in planning and operations, UNPOL personnel should:

- **Maintain situational awareness to identify and understand risks and threats to children within the operational environment, taking into account the capacity and challenges faced by the host-State police.**
- **Conduct threat assessments in coordination with UN military and child protection counterparts as well as the host-State police to prioritize risk mitigation measures that address the most significant risks to children.**
- **Incorporate child protection considerations into the planning, execution, and review of law enforcement operations, ensuring that strategies to support host-State police prioritize the safety and protection of children.**
- **Integrate child protection considerations into contingency plans to manage unforeseen scenarios that could impact children.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

CHILD PROTECTION THREAT ASSESSMENTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

In countries hosting UN peacekeeping operations, threats to children can arise from parties to the conflict as well as from criminal activities and lawlessness. These threats may include direct harm from armed forces, armed groups, militias, or extremist factions, alongside risks stemming from criminal activities, such as trafficking and exploitation, and the breakdown of law and order.

UNPOL plays a critical role in addressing these threats, helping ensure a comprehensive approach to child protection in UN peacekeeping operations.



Police Officers in South Sudan. Photo: UNMISS.

Key Considerations for Child Protection in Threat Assessments and Risk Analyses

Conducting threat assessments and risk analyses to protect children during policing operations requires a systematic approach to identifying, assessing, and prioritizing risks. This process involves understanding the operational environment, including threats that may directly harm children, (e.g., armed violence, trafficking) as well as factors that increase their vulnerabilities (e.g., weakened governance or socio-economic challenges). By analyzing the likelihood and potential impact of these risks, along with the use of early warning indicators, and gender-related considerations, UNPOL can better assess emerging threats and develop targeted risk mitigation measures.

UN Police focal points within the Joint Mission Analysis Centre and the Joint Operations Centre play a crucial role in contributing to the mission's early warning and situational awareness. They provide valuable information on threats and incidents affecting children, which helps inform operational responses and strategic planning.

UN Police planners, in close coordination with the PHQ CPFP and the Child Protection Section/Unit, are responsible for ensuring that child protection threats are systematically identified and incorporated into all phases of the UNPOL operational planning cycle.⁸⁹

To support this process, a detailed table at the end of this chapter provides additional guidance on incorporating child protection considerations into threat assessments and risk analyses.

MANAGING THE IMPACT OF UN POLICE OPERATIONS ON CHILDREN: PLANNING AND EXECUTION CONSIDERATIONS

UN peacekeeping operations must integrate the protection of children in all UNPOL operations, particularly during public order management and other law enforcement activities, to prevent or mitigate potential risks to children and ensure their safety during operations. This responsibility includes supporting the host-State police in strengthening their capacity and ensuring compliance with international norms and standards on the use of force.

Effectively managing the impact of UNPOL operations on children requires a collaborative and well-coordinated effort across various stakeholders within the UN Police component. While the UNPOL Planning Unit integrates inputs from various stakeholders into the annual work plan, monitors progress and ensures that child protection is integrated into operational plans, addressing potential risks to children and promoting their safety throughout all phases of UNPOL operations, the responsibility for implementing child protection measures is distributed across different sections and units.

Before initiating police operations: Conduct a thorough assessment of potential risks to children that could arise during public order management operations. Direct risks might include exposure to violence, injuries during crowd control, detention, or being used as human shields. Indirect risks could involve disruptions to daily activities (e.g., schooling), or psychological impacts (e.g., trauma or fear) due to the presence of law enforcement personnel or other security forces. To prevent or mitigate these risks, develop tailored strategies in collaboration with the host-State police. These might include establishing buffer zones around areas where children are present, such as schools, marketplaces, or residential areas. Ensure operational plans account for scenarios involving children, including their possible presence in protests, disturbances, or other high-risk situations. Additionally, conduct joint scenario-based training for Formed Police Units and host-State police personnel that include managing situations involving children during protests, riots, or checkpoints, focusing on preventing or minimizing harm and safeguarding children's rights.

Operational planning: When planning operations, carefully assess the location, timing, and methods of crowd control measures. Pay special attention to areas where children are likely to be present or involved. If information indicates that children may be used to instigate violence or as human shields, consider de-escalation tactics in coordination with the host-State police to prevent or minimize harm. Ensure that operations are planned and executed in accordance with international law, the Directive on the Use of Force and mission-specific child protection guidance. This includes avoiding the use of force near areas frequented by children and adhering to protocols when children are present in protests, blockades, or other high-risk situations.

Tactical execution: Before any operation, brief FPU and host-State police units on the potential presence of children, emphasizing the associated risks involved. Adapt tactics to prevent escalating situations that could endanger children, particularly during arrests or dispersals. Pay special attention to non-violent protests, such as sit-ins or blockades involving children. Adjust operational timelines to avoid periods when children are more vulnerable, such as school hours, times when children frequent public spaces, or during large-scale civilian movements.

Continuous monitoring: Throughout operations, monitor for unintended consequences that might affect children. Adjust tactics as needed to prevent or minimize harm, such as modifying crowd control measures or relocating check-points. After each operation, assess the impact on children, including any direct or indirect consequences. Document good practices and lessons learned and improve future operational planning, ensuring child protection considerations are integrated more effectively.

Coordination and reporting: Maintain close coordination with the Police headquarters child protection focal point, the Child Protection Section/Unit and other relevant protection actors throughout the planning and execution of operations. They can offer valuable advice on preventing or minimizing risks to children. The police CPFPs should ensure that any incidents involving children, such as arrests or injuries during public disturbances, or incidents where children are exploited to provoke police responses, are immediately reported to the CPS/U through the established information-sharing and reporting channel.

Contingency Planning and Child Protection: FPU Considerations

Incorporating child protection into Formed Police Unit contingency plans (CON-PLANS) requires anticipating potential disturbances that could pose risks to children during public order operations, such as sudden escalations in protests or riots, or unexpected movements of violent groups. For instance, a sudden escalation in violence may necessitate the use of force by FPU or the host-State police to manage crowds. In such cases, it is essential to implement measures that can prevent or mitigate harm to children. Similarly, if violent groups move unexpectedly into areas where children are present, such as schools or residential areas, FPU CONPLANS must include strategies to protect children from exposure to violence, injury, or wrongful detention.

To address these risks effectively, FPU CONPLANS should incorporate proactive measures, including:

- Anticipating scenarios involving children in protests, riots, or other public order disturbances, and rehearsing responses to prevent or minimize harm. This includes employing de-escalation tactics or establishing buffer zones, as part of scenario planning.
- Coordinating with the host-State police to align their strategies with child protection priorities. This includes training the host-State police on child



Pouloubou (Southeastern CAR)- MINUSCA's Peacekeepers from the Tunisian Rapid Reaction Force and Congolese Formed Police Unit, and Central African Police elements preparing to conduct a joint patrol as part of "Operation Mingala". This operation is intended to pool efforts to protect civilians. Photo: MINUSCA/ Capitaine Brahim OUAGRANI

protection and ensuring their operational plans address the presence of children in potentially volatile situations.

- Coordinating with child protection actors to ensure FPU actions align with child protection priorities and develop strategies that prevent operations from exacerbating risks to children.
- Adapting to evolving threats in real time by modifying crowd management tactics in collaboration with the host-State police to ensure children's protection, particularly when they are involved in blockades or protests.
- If the use of force becomes necessary, in line with the Directive on the Use of Force, ensuring that tactical decisions made jointly with the host-State police prevent or minimize risks to children, protecting them from injury, wrongful detention, or trauma.
- Monitoring operations continuously to assess their impact on children and adjusting tactics as necessary to address emerging risks.
- Regularly reviewing and updating CONPLANS to ensure they remain effective in responding to evolving operational environments and child-specific risks.

By incorporating these child protection-focused strategies into FPU CONPLANS and ensuring effective coordination with the host-State police, UNPOL operations can better respond to unforeseen events while prioritizing the safety and protection of children in public order scenarios.

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR MILITARY CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

Police CFPs are responsible for supporting the integration of child protection considerations into the planning and execution of UN Police operations. Key actions include:

- ✓ Working closely with UNPOL planners at the mission headquarters to ensure child protection measures are incorporated into all operational planning and execution
- ✓ Becoming familiar with the Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection and ensure that it is implemented into all planning and operational activities.
- ✓ Understanding the mission-specific Directive on the Use of Force and how to apply these rules in various scenarios to protect children.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. Community-Oriented Policing

A key component of UNPOL's effectiveness is its community-oriented policing (COP) approach, which emphasizes collaboration with local communities to enhance the protection of civilians, including children. The Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection assigns the following tasks to UN Police personnel regarding COP:

- Plan and conduct community engagement to gather information on violations against children and assess local perceptions of threats to children.
- Support the host-State police by integrating child protection measures into their COP strategies and providing operational assistance.
- Strengthen the specific capacities of the host-State police to effectively implement COP approaches that prioritize child protection.

UNPOL personnel can undertake the following practical actions to effectively contribute to COP initiatives aimed at enhancing child protection.

Plan and Conduct Community Engagement	Objective: Facilitate trust-building between law enforcement and communities, allowing for more effective identification of child-specific threats. ■ Plan and execute joint patrols with the host-State police, prioritizing areas with a history of child protection issues or where risks to children are high and clarify roles for both UNPOL and the host-State police during patrols to ensure a strong focus on child protection. ■ Collaborate with local leaders and community members to identify areas where children are most vulnerable. ■ Establish relationships with community leaders, parents, teachers, and child protection actors who can provide valuable information on potential violations. ■ Conduct informal community meetings to hear concerns and gather insights on child protection issues.
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	■ Collect information on any reported or suspected violations against children, ensuring accurate recording of incidents and reporting to the CPS/U through established channels. ■ Ask community members about their perceptions of security for children, identifying any gaps in protection or recurring threats. ■ Coordinate with police CPFs, the CPS/U and child protection actors to address any immediate risks to children identified during the patrols, ensuring swift action, including appropriate referrals to services.
Support Host-State Police	Objective: Enhance the capacity of the host-State police to incorporate child protection considerations into its community policing activities. ■ Provide technical guidance and expertise to the host-State police during joint patrols and community engagements to ensure effective integration of child protection in planning and execution. ■ Conduct joint training sessions focused on community policing strategies that address child protection. ■ Regularly review and adapt community policing strategies to reflect new or emerging child protection concerns, ensuring that local realities are taken into account. ■ Collaborate with the host-State police to create specific procedures for responding to incidents involving children, such as sexual violence, and the arrest and detention of children. ■ Implement protocols for safe referrals to local child protection actors when violations are identified. ■ Encourage the host-State police to take the lead in community outreach events to strengthen their rapport with the local population.
Provide Operational Support and Strengthen Specific Capacities	Objective: Enable the host-State police to independently conduct community-oriented policing with a strong child protection focus by enhancing their operational capacities. ■ Conduct specialized training sessions for the host-State police on mainstreaming child protection considerations in COP. ■ Provide ongoing mentorship and support (including through co-locations, where in place) to reinforce skills, ensuring host-State officers feel confident in applying child protection measures. ■ Offer operational assistance for the planning and conduct of patrols, ensuring child protection considerations are embedded from the outset. ■ Deploy UNPOL officers to work directly alongside the host-State police during high-risk COP operations, advising on child-sensitive approaches and serving as a liaison with other child protection actors.

TABLE 18: Community-oriented policing



Community-oriented policing. MONUSCO. UN Photo

B. Guiding Points for Threat Assessment and Risk Analysis in Child Protection

GUIDING POINTS FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND RISK ANALYSIS

1. Assess the operational environment

Continuously gather and analyze information about the operational environment to identify risks to children.

- What are the political, security and social dynamics affecting children?
- Are criminal groups involved in trafficking, exploitation or violence targeting children, and what are their capabilities?
- Which locations (e.g., schools, detention facilities, refugee/IDP camps) pose heightened risks to children?
- How do local gender norms influence the vulnerabilities of boys and girls?
- What is the capacity of the host-State police to address child protection issues?
- How can UNPOL support the host-State police in gathering and analyzing information on child protection risks?

2. Maintain situational awareness

Monitor changes in the local environment and adjust actions to mitigate emerging risks to children.

- What trends in crime or violence are emerging (e.g., trafficking, recruitment by armed forces and armed groups, conflict-related sexual violence) that disproportionately affect children?
- How do changes in security and social conditions impact children's safety?
- Are new risks or gender-specific vulnerabilities arising due to shifts in the local social and security context?
- How effective are the host-State police in responding to these changes, and how can UNPOL assist?

3. Assess threats

Assess the capacity and intent of actors, including criminal groups and armed elements that pose threats to children.

- What are the primary threats to children (e.g., trafficking, recruitment into armed forces and armed groups, detention)?
- How do these threats differ for boys and girls, and what specific law enforcement responses are needed?
- What opportunities do perpetrators have to harm children, and how can these be prevented or mitigated?
- How does corruption or weak law enforcement enable these threats?
- How can UNPOL and the host-State police collaborate to counter these threats effectively?

4. Conduct vulnerability assessment

Identify vulnerable children within communities and assess how several factors increase their exposure to harm.

- Which children are most vulnerable (e.g., displaced, trafficked, street children, those in detention)?
- How do vulnerabilities differ based on gender, age, or socio-economic status?
- How can UNPOL assist the host-State police in identifying and protecting vulnerable children?

5. Perform risk analysis

Assess the likelihood and impact of child-related risks

- What are the most likely risks to children? Do they differ for boys and girls?
- What is the capacity of the host-State police and other protection actors to address these risks?
- How can UNPOL support the host-State police in prioritizing and responding to these risks?

6. Determine risk levels

Categorize risks based on likelihood and impact on children.

- Which risks to children are considered high, medium, or low in terms of their likelihood and impact?
- How can UNPOL guide the host-State police in prioritizing resources and responses to address these risks?

7. Identify priority risks

Focus on the risks with the highest likelihood and most severe impacts on children, prioritizing law enforcement actions to address protection gaps.

- Which threats pose the greatest risk to children, particularly gender-specific threats?
- How can UNPOL support the host-State police in addressing the most urgent child protection concerns?

8. Develop risk mitigation plans

Support the host-State police in developing risk mitigation strategies, including gender-specific protection measures, to address high-priority risks to children.

- What mitigation strategies can address high-priority risks (e.g., targeted policing patrols with the host-State police, joint patrols with UN military, community outreach)?
- How can gender-specific measures be integrated to protect boys and girls?
- How can UNPOL assist the host-State police in incorporating child protection into community-oriented policing efforts?

9. Monitor and adapt to emerging threats

Regularly update assessments and adjust strategies to account for new or changing threats in the operational environment.

- What new or changing risks to children, including gender-specific risks, have emerged?
- How can UNPOL and the host-State police adjust their strategies to address these effectively?

TABLE 19: Guiding points for threat assessment and risk analysis in child protection

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Specialized Training Materials for United Nations Police Officers (2021), Lesson 4: Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, Lesson 5: Community-Oriented Policing, Lesson 9: Protection of Civilians by UN Police, and Lesson 10: Use of Force and Firearms by UN Police, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/stm/unpol>
- Specialized Training Materials for Formed Police Units (2015), available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/stm/fpu>.
- Free and safe to protest. Policing assemblies involving children (2023): <https://www.unicef.org/reports/free-and-safe-protest>.

EXERCISES

In UN peacekeeping operations, integrating child protection considerations into police planning and operations is important, including in public order scenarios where the presence of children may significantly heighten risks. The exercise accompanying Chapter 10 of the handbook focuses on supporting UNPOL personnel to prioritize children during planning for public order management operations.



EXERCISE 10.1:

Integrating Child Protection into United Nations Police Operations

Instructions

- Based on the scenario provided below, as the UNPOL officer responsible for planning this operation, work closely with the Police headquarters child protection focal point and your host-State police counterpart to identify considerations that need to be addressed to protect children during the protest. Specifically, consider:
 - ▶ Risks that children may face in the protest setting.
 - ▶ Crowd management tactics to protect children.
 - ▶ Possible strategies to prevent escalation and protect children.
 - ▶ Coordination and reporting requirements.
 - ▶ A contingency plan if the protest begins to escalate.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario

A peaceful protest is expected to take place in a market area where many children are present. Tensions are expected to rise during the protest, and there is a concern that some demonstrators may attempt to use children participating in the protest as shields, positioning them at the front of the crowd.

GUIDANCE TABLE

1. Action for planner: Ensure that risks to children are considered from all angles, including how their safety will be monitored throughout the protest. Consider potential interventions to limit harm to children before it escalates. <i>Considerations:</i> ■ Identify whether children are present as participants or bystanders and assess the likelihood of their involvement in any potential harm. Consider that they may be used by protestors as shields. ■ Assess the risks of children being exposed to physical harm during crowd control measures or potential violence. ■ Recognize the potential for psychological trauma and exploitation of children, including coercion or use in protests for political purposes. ■ Plan for mechanisms to monitor children's movements and position within the crowd (e.g., leveraging community networks or local non-governmental organizations for real-time updates).
2. Action for planner: Consider how crowd management tactics will prioritize children's safety. Think about where children are likely to be in the crowd and how best to protect them from harm. <i>Considerations:</i> ■ Identify areas where children are likely to be concentrated and assess where they may be at a higher risk (e.g., areas near protest leadership or near barricades). ■ Plan tactics to prevent children from being placed in dangerous positions or becoming involved in confrontations, ensuring that any use of force is consistent with the mission's mandate and the Directive on the Use of Force. ■ Plan to create designated safe areas for children and families to seek refuge if tensions escalate or violence begins.
3. Action for planner: Consider integrating strategies into planning that aim to reduce tensions and protect children from harm by addressing factors that could lead to heightened risks. <i>Considerations:</i> ■ Assess the factors that could contribute to escalation (e.g., incitement by protest leaders, rising agitation within the crowd), and identify situations where children could be harmed if tensions rise. ■ Plan for engaging community influencers to promote peaceful demonstrations and emphasize the importance of child protection.

4. Action for planner: Ensure that coordination mechanisms and reporting processes include child protection considerations.

Considerations:

- Define channels for sharing real-time information on child-related incidents with the Child Protection Section/Unit.
- Clarify coordination roles and processes with host-State authorities, the Child Protection Section/Unit, child protection actors, and other stakeholders.

5. Action for planner: Develop a contingency plan (CONPLAN) that prioritizes child protection and is coordinated with the host-State police in the event of an escalation.

Considerations:

- Plan for various escalation scenarios, considering the potential for violence or disorder and the associated risks to children.
- Identify clear actions to protect children in case of an escalation.
- Ensure that the CONPLAN is flexible and adaptable to address unforeseen risks to children.

CHAPTER 11

Mentoring, Advising and Strengthening the Capacity of the Host-State Police on Child Protection

The host-State police have the responsibility to protect children and ensure their safety, including within the realm of justice for children. Training, mentoring, and advising the host-State police are essential to support the full integration of child protection into their operations. This support ensures the host-State police adopt child-sensitive approaches across in criminal investigations, apprehensions, arrests, detentions, and referrals for child victims, witnesses, and those at risk of harm, abuse, exploitation, or criminal involvement. Such guidance must be grounded in international law and international guidelines related to justice for children, while also considering applicable national laws to ensure that the host-State police effectively address their responsibilities in juvenile justice. UNPOL should guide the host-State police to prioritize the best interest of the child, addressing their specialized needs throughout the justice process.

To successfully mainstream child protection considerations into mentoring, advisory and capacity-building roles, UN Police personnel in collaboration with the Child Protection Section/Unit should:

- **Advise on developing and implementing child-friendly protocols that ensure the protection of children during their interactions with the host-State police during criminal investigations, apprehension, arrest, and detention.**
- **Guide the establishment of standards of practice for the humane and ethical handling of children in contact with the law or children in conflict with the law, ensuring these standards are adopted and maintained within host-State police operations.**
- **Advocate for child-sensitive, trauma-informed approaches in criminal investigations, apprehensions, arrests, and detentions, and assist the host-State police in building the capacity to sustain these approaches independently.**

UN military and police personnel should consider whether and how the guidance presented in this chapter applies to their individual roles and responsibilities in the mission.

MENTORING, ADVISING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Effective mentoring, advising, and capacity-building are essential to integrating child protection considerations into the operations of the host-State police. UNPOL's approach should include both immediate support and long-term strategies to ensure that the host-State police can independently uphold child protection norms and standards. Some key areas of focus include:



UNMISS Police trains Senior South Sudan National Police officers on the protection of children in conflict with the law. Photo: UNMISS/Isaac Billy

- **Child-sensitive interview techniques:** Training host-State police officers to engage with children, whether as victims, witnesses, or children in conflict with the law in an age-appropriate, respectful, and non-coercive manner, ensuring that interactions are conducted in a way that minimizes harm and supports their dignity.
- **Trauma-informed care:** Equipping police officers with the knowledge and skills to identify and appropriately respond to signs of trauma that children may experience due to violence, exploitation, or other forms of harm.
- **Gender-sensitive approaches:** Ensuring police officers understand the unique vulnerabilities and needs of both girls and boys in contact or in conflict with the law, ensuring their treatment is appropriate and sensitive to gender differences.
- **Juvenile justice processes:** Advising on the specialized handling of cases involving children, ensuring that legal framework respects the child's best interests at all stages of the process, from investigation through trial and reintegration.
- **Referral pathways and coordination:** Supporting the host-State police in expanding and strengthening existing referral systems to foster greater collaboration with other actors of the juvenile justice system.

To build lasting capacity, UNPOL should also support the host-State police in institutionalizing child protection practices across their operations. This can be achieved through:

- **Training programmes:** Supporting the development and delivery of training on child-sensitive interview techniques, trauma-informed care, gender-sensitive practices, and juvenile justice systems to build police capacity in these areas.
- **Police protocols:** Assisting the host-State police in integrating child protection measures into guidance that reflect international child protection norms and standards and are consistently applied across all police departments.
- **Ongoing professional development:** Encouraging continuous professional development and updates on child protection practices, ensuring police officers stay informed about new developments related to international standards and best practices.
- **Specialized child protection units:** Promoting the establishment of dedicated units within the police force to handle child-related cases, ensuring trained officers provide appropriate care and support.

CHILD PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS FOR UN POLICE IN MENTORING HOST-STATE POLICE ON CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS, APPREHENSION, ARREST AND DETENTION

UNPOL personnel involved in mentoring and advising host-State police can refer to the key considerations outlined in the table at the end of this chapter to ensure that child protection concerns are integrated throughout the justice process, in coordination with the UNPOL headquarters child protection focal point and the Child Protection Section/Unit.

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR POLICE CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINTS

Police CFPs are responsible for supporting the integration of child protection considerations into the mentoring, advisory and capacity-building efforts of the host-State police. Key actions include:

- ✓ Working closely with UN Police counterparts at mission headquarters and regional headquarters responsible for mentoring and advising the host-State police on justice and law enforcement matters, including criminal investigations, to ensure child protection measures are incorporated into these areas.
- ✓ Becoming familiar with the national legal framework that protect children's rights to provide accurate, context-specific advice to the host-State police, ensuring alignment with international norms and standards, and advocate for legislative changes when national laws do not conform to standards.
- ✓ During briefings with the Senior Child Protection Adviser and/or civilian child protection staff, enquiring whether the host-State police have established protocols and standard operating procedures for handling criminal investigations, apprehension, arrest, and detention involving children. Similarly, asking if the host-State police have specialized police units focusing on children in conflict or in contact with the law.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RELEVANT TOOLS

A. How to Promote Child-friendly Interactions with Children

UNPOL personnel are not mandated to work directly with children. However, UNPOL plays a critical role in guiding and training the host-State police in adopting child-friendly techniques in their interactions with children. It is important for UNPOL officers to know UN guidance and approach to interacting and communicating with children, as it will inform their advisory and mentoring role vis-à-vis the host-State police.

Key considerations		Actions
1	Adapting communication to a child	■ Use short, simple sentences that convey one idea at a time. ■ Frame questions and statements positively. ■ Avoid judgmental or biased language. ■ Use open, non-leading questions to encourage the child's own expression. ■ Respect the child's right to remain silent if they feel uncomfortable.
2	Elements for interacting with a child	■ Introduce yourself using child-friendly language. ■ Ask the child to briefly identify themselves. ■ Ensure the child feels safe and their basic needs are met. ■ Confirm the child understands the situation and clarify what is happening. ■ Explain the next steps (e.g., how the information received will be used). ■ Ask the child if they have any questions. ■ In case of referral to a service provider, share information on the services available to the child, if known.
3	Physical presence	■ Be mindful of power dynamics and adjust your posture to ensure the child feels safe. ■ Always presume the child is innocent and uphold their rights at all times regardless of their legal status. ■ Position yourself at the child's level to avoid intimidation. ■ Maintain a comfortable distance and avoiding unnecessary physical contact. ■ Be sensitive to body language and words that could be perceived as suggestive or aggressive. ■ Establish eye contact but be mindful of cultural norms.

4	Non-verbal communication	■ Maintain a calm and patient demeanor to help the child feel at ease. ■ Avoid gestures, expressions, or tones that convey judgment, annoyance, or impatience. ■ Ensure your body language signals attentiveness and respect.
5	Active listening	■ Establish rapport by introducing yourself and building a connection with the child. ■ Listen attentively, allowing the child time to speak and think. ■ Show interest and engagement through body language and verbal prompts. ■ Never raise your voice or interrupt the child. ■ Avoid taking notes during initial interactions unless necessary.
6	Gender sensitivity	■ Allow the child to choose the gender of the police officer(s) to interact with, do not make assumptions based on gender norms. ■ Focus questions on the case at hand and avoid intrusive or irrelevant questions about personal life or appearance. ■ Respect the child's preferences and comfort level during the interview.
7	Coordination	■ Collaborate with civilian child protection staff, particularly when conducting training or capacity building efforts with the host-State police in this area.
8	Use of interpreters	■ Explain the role of the interpreter to the child and ensure the child and their parents(s) or guardian(s) understand its purpose and consent to it. ■ Ensure the interpreter understands child-friendly interviewing techniques. ■ Ensure the interpreter accurately conveys both the police officer's and the child's words. Request a colleague who speaks the local language for quality control if possible. ■ Allow sufficient time for the interview, including breaks, as using an interpreter may slow down the process. ■ Phrase questions simply to avoid confusion during interpretation.

9	Differences between interviewing children and adults	■ Be aware that children's decision making and memory may be influenced by their developmental stage. ■ Adapt questions and explanations based on the child's age, maturity, gender, and cultural background. ■ Recognize that children may not understand the urgency of a situation or perceive time as adults do. ■ Be aware that children may become more distressed when recalling traumatic events or may have shorter attention spans. ■ Recognize that children may feel intimidated by authority figures or unfamiliar environments. ■ Understand that children from conflict zones may exhibit behaviors different from those in peaceful settings.
10	Recognizing and managing distress	■ Recognize signs of trauma or shock and refer to medical professionals, if needed. ■ Be mindful that recalling traumatic events can cause additional stress. ■ Minimize the child's distress by limiting the length of interviews, coordinating with medical professionals involving a social worker when necessary.
11	Core guidelines for child-friendly interviews	■ Avoid judgmental language or actions that could insult, humiliate, or retraumatize the child. ■ Treat all children equally, regardless of their background. ■ Focus only on relevant details and avoid asking children to act out or describe events. ■ Ensure the child and their parents(s) or guardian(s) understand the interview's purpose and consent to it. ■ Protect the child's privacy and ensure a secure and respectful environment during the interview.

TABLE 20: How to promote child-friendly interactions with children

B. Child Protection Considerations on Criminal Investigations, Apprehension, Arrest and Detention

Child-Sensitive Practices in Apprehension and Arrest		
Key considerations		Actions
1	Adhere to the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR)	■ Confirm the MACR in national laws and ensure alignment with international standards, specifically a minimum age of 14 years or higher. ■ Do not arrest, prosecute, or detain children under the MACR. ■ Ensure diversion measures are considered at all stages of the process, from pre-arrest to post-sentencing, to minimize a child's involvement in the judicial system. At the pretrial stage, diversion helps avoid detention and formal judicial proceedings whenever possible.

		■ Release children under the MACR to parents/guardians, or social workers whenever possible. ■ Recognize that a child's consent to situations of abuse or violations does not absolve their need for protection or change their status as a child.
2	Ensure compliance with due process	■ Verify that arrests have legal basis and comply with national law. ■ Custody should always be used only as a last resort and for the shortest possible period. Children must be charged within 24 hours of arrest/apprehension (or less, if required by national law), or released.
3	Involve parents or guardians	■ Notify parents/guardians immediately upon a child's arrest. ■ Facilitate their participation in interviews, unless doing so is not in the child's best interest. ■ Ensure the child is fully informed of the situation and given the opportunity to express their views and ask questions.
4	Respectful treatment during arrest	■ Use age-appropriate methods that avoid excessive force, brutality, or the use of harmful devices. ■ Conduct searches with respect for the child's privacy. Children must never be subjected to strip or body cavity searches. ■ Use handcuffs only when absolutely necessary, such as when the child poses a threat to themselves, others, or the arresting officers; a child should not be handcuffed if they are not a danger or if they are cooperative.
5	Conduct age assessments when necessary	■ Verify the child's age using reliable documents, such as birth certificates, or statements from the child or parents. ■ Treat individuals as children if their age is uncertain.
6	Preserve the child's dignity	■ Treat all children with respect, regardless of circumstances. ■ Avoid actions that could degrade, humiliate, or instill fear in the child. ■ Prohibit coercive interview techniques. ■ Force may only be used when strictly necessary, in a proportionate and non-discriminatory manner, such as in self-defense, to prevent escape, or to address physical resistance to a lawful order.
7	Facilitate access to a lawyer	■ Provide immediate access to legal counsel for children in detention. ■ Facilitate private consultations between the child and their lawyer to ensure confidentiality.

TABLE 21: Child protection considerations on criminal investigations, apprehension, and arrest

Child-Sensitive Practices in Detention		
Key considerations		Actions
1	Detention as a last resort	■ Use detention only when absolutely necessary, ensuring it is lawful and in the child's best interest. ■ Prioritize alternatives such as release to parents/guardians or community-based solutions. ■ Ensure detention is for the shortest time possible, with release or formal charges within 24 hours.
2	Pretrial detention	■ Limit pretrial detention to serious cases, and only after considering other alternatives. ■ Minimize the duration of pretrial detention to what is essential for judicial proceedings. ■ Avoid placing children in police cells or transport vehicles unless unavoidable.
3	Conditions of detention	■ Provide child-appropriate detention conditions, including separation from adults, boys and girls, and accused and convicted children to ensure their safety and well-being. ■ Ensure children have access to adequate food, medical care, legal assistance, and mechanisms to challenge the legality of detention. In cases where a child is detained with a family member, the family unit shall be preserved in separate facilities conducive for families, and the child shall not be separated (provided it is in the child's best interest). ■ Ensure unrestricted access for UN child protection and human rights staff to detention facilities for monitoring and assessing conditions.
4	Alternatives to police custody	■ Prioritize alternatives like house arrest, referral to social services or counselling. ■ Avoid using bail systems that may disproportionately impact marginalized children.
5	Diversion	■ Divert children from formal judicial processes whenever possible. ■ Implement non-punitive measures such as verbal warnings, referrals to social services, or community-based support to encourage reintegration.
6	Alternatives to detention in sentencing measures	■ Consider non-custodial sentencing options, such as community service or vocational training, as alternatives to incarceration. ■ Ensure follow-up for these measures is handled by judicial authorities rather than the police.

TABLE 22: Child protection considerations on detention

COMPLEMENTARY READING

- Specialized Training Materials for United Nations Police Officers (2021), Lesson 7: Capacity-building and Development, Lesson 8: UNPOL Monitoring, Mentoring and Advising, and Lesson 11: Apprehension, Arrest and Detention in UN Peace Operations, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/stm/unpol>
- Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023), Module 1: How to promote child-friendly interactions with children, Module 2: How to support child-friendly prevention and diversion, Module 3: How to support child-sensitive apprehension, arrest and detention, and Module 4: How to adapt justice for children to a United Nations peace operation, available at: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police>
- Training programme on the treatment of child victims and witnesses of crime for law enforcement officials (2015): https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Training_Programme_on_the_Treatment_of_Child_Victims_and_Child_Witnesses_of_Crime_-_Law_Enforcement.pdf

EXERCISES

Mentoring host-State police on child protection requires a solid understanding of international child protection norms and standards, including concerning children in conflict with the law. The exercise accompanying Chapter 11 of the handbook focuses on guiding the host-State police integrate child-sensitive practices into their handling of apprehension, arrest and detention procedures.



EXERCISE 11.1:

Mentoring and Advising the Host-State Police on Child-Sensitive Practices During Apprehension, Arrest and Detention

Instructions

- Using the scenario provided below, as a UN Police officer mentoring the host-State police, collaborate with the Police headquarters child protection focal point to identify the issues regarding how the host-State police handled the situation. Pay attention to areas such as:
 - ▶ Adherence to the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR).
 - ▶ Compliance with due process.
 - ▶ Involvement of parents or guardians.

- Based on the issues identified, propose immediate actions to address these concerns. Focus on what the host-State police should do right away to ensure child-sensitive practices are being followed.
- Once you have completed the exercise, cross-check your answers with the table below to assess your understanding.

Scenario

The host-State police arrested several children, aged 12 to 15, for alleged involvement in petty theft at a busy market. The arrest was conducted publicly, attracting attention from bystanders. Some children were restrained using handcuffs, and the families were not informed of the arrests. No parents or guardians were present during the arrest or processing. Afterward, the children were detained in a crowded, poorly maintained facility, where they were mixed with adult detainees. Reports suggest the children are visibly distressed, and there are no established procedures in place for handling juvenile detainees.

GUIDANCE TABLE

Issues Identified:
1. Adherence to the minimum age of criminal responsibility
■ Issue: The host-State police did not verify the age of the children before arresting them. While the ages of the children (12 to 15) indicate that some may be under the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR), this was not checked. ■ Immediate action: Verify the age of the children before proceeding with any further actions. This can be done using reliable documents (e.g., identification cards/birth certificates), or statements from the child or parents. If they are under the MACR, stop the arrest process immediately and release the children to their parents, guardians, or social workers. If there is no proof of age and it cannot be established whether the individual is below or above the MACR, apply the benefit of the doubt and treat them as a child.⁹⁰
2. Compliance with due process
■ Issue: The children were arrested and detained without being informed of their rights or given the opportunity to contact their families. There was no indication of whether the arrest was legally justified or if it complied with national laws. ■ Immediate action: Ensure that the arrest complies with the law and that the children are informed of their rights. Arrested children must be charged or released within the legally mandated time frame. If charges are not pressed, they must be released immediately.

3. Involvement of parents or guardians

- **Issue:** The children's parents or guardians were not informed about the arrests. They were not present during the arrest or subsequent processing of the children.
- **Immediate action:** Contact the children's parents or guardians immediately upon arrest and inform them of the situation. Ensure they are involved in any interviews or legal processes, unless it is determined that their involvement is not in the best interest of the child.

4. Treatment during arrest

- **Issue:** Some children were handcuffed during arrest. This may have been unnecessary, especially considering that the children were not reported to be violent or a threat to the arresting officers. The public nature of the arrest could have caused unnecessary distress to the children.
- **Immediate action:** Avoid using handcuffs unless absolutely necessary (e.g., if the child poses a risk to themselves or others). Ensure that the arrest is conducted privately to avoid public humiliation and use age-appropriate methods to handle the children with respect and care.

5. Conditions of detention

- **Issue:** The children were detained in a facility where they were placed among adult detainees. This poses a significant risk to their safety and well-being. The facility was also described as poorly maintained, which could impact the children's physical and mental health.
- **Immediate action:** Immediately transfer the children to a detention facility that is appropriate for their age and ensures their safety. Children must always be separated from adults, girls must be separated from boys, and children in conflict with the law shall be separated from children in conflict with the law. The facility must be properly maintained to ensure their physical and psychological well-being.

6. Access to legal representation

- **Issue:** The children were not provided with immediate access to legal counsel, which is a violation of their rights to due process and protection under international child protection standards.
- **Immediate action:** Provide the children with immediate access to legal counsel. Ensure they can meet with their lawyer in private and that their right to legal representation is respected throughout the process.



A member of the Congolese National Police shows his support for the protection of children during a sensitisation campaign in Kinshasa. On his t-shirt is written "La Police aide à protéger les enfants" (Police help protect children). Photo: MONUSCO/Myriam Asmani.

References

Normative or superior references

- Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict: 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012), 2143 (2014), 2225 (2015), 2427 (2018), 2601 (2021), and 2764 (2024)
- General Assembly resolution on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/51/77)
- UN Secretary-General's Bulletin, Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13)

Related policies and guidance

- DPO Policy on Gender-Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2024)
- UN, Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Child Rights Mainstreaming (2023)
- DPO/DPPA Handbook for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations (2023)
- DPO Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping (2023)
- DPO Protection of Civilians: Implementing Guidelines for the Military Component of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2023)
- United Nations Deployed Military Field Headquarters Handbook (2023)
- DPO Guidelines on Implementing a Gender Perspective into the Military Component of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2023)
- DPO Standard Operating Procedure/Directives for Heads of Police Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2022)
- OSRSG-CAAC and UNICEF, Guidance Note on Abduction (2022)
- United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (2021)
- DPO/DPPA/DSS Standard Operating Procedure for the Handling of Detention in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2020)
- DOS/DPO/DPPA/DSS Policy on Casualty Evacuation in the Field (2020)
- DPO Handbook on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping (2020)
- DPO/DPPA/OHCHR/SRSG-SVC Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence (2020)
- UN Infantry Battalion Manual (2020) (under review)
- DPO/DPPA/OHCHR/OSRSG-SVC Policy for UN Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence (2019)
- DPO Guidelines on the Combined Military and Police Coordination in Peace Operations (2019)
- DPO/DOS Policy on Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2019)

- DPO Manual on Community-Oriented Policing in United Nations Peace Operations (2018)
- DPKO-DFS/DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017)
- DPKO-DFS Guidelines on the role of the United Nations Police in the Protection of Civilians (2017)
- United Nations Manual on Mission-Based Police Planning in Peace Operations (2017)
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action (2016)
- DPKO-DFS Guidelines on Police Administration in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2016) (under review)
- DPKO-DFS Guidelines on Police Command in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2015)
- DPKO-DFS Policy on United Nations Police in Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2014) (under review)
- DPKO/OSRSG-CAAC/UNICEF, Guidelines and Field Manual: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (2014)
- United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to non-United Nations Security Forces (2011)
- OHCHR/DPKO/DPA/DFS Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Political Missions (2011)
- DPKO-DFS Policy on Gender Equality in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2010)

Other references

- UNICEF, Free and safe to protest. Policing assemblies involving children (2023)
- OSRSG-CAAC, Towards Greater Inclusion: A Discussion Paper on the CAAC mandate and Children with Disabilities in Armed Conflict (2023)
- OSRSG-CAAC, The Gender Dimensions of Grave Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict (2022)
- United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (2019)
- UNICEF and UNODC, Training programme on the treatment of child victims and witnesses of crime for law enforcement officials (2015)
- Canadian Red Cross, Children and War Toolkit: Even Wars Have Limits, (2011)

End Notes

- 1 The 1996 Graça Machel report on the impact of armed conflict on children laid the foundation for the children and armed conflict agenda, resulting in the establishment of the initial mandate for children affected by war. United Nations Member States spearheaded the development of this agenda and, since 1999, the protection of children has been formally incorporated into the international peace and security framework.
- 2 The Protection of Civilians (POC) mandate in UN peacekeeping is defined as: 'without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host state, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians, within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment, through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force'.
- 3 Effective protection strategies must also integrate considerations of other protection mandates, i.e., the promotion and protection of human rights and preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. For more detailed information on the complementarity of these protection mandates, and guidance for the implementation of military and police tasks required to fulfil the POC mandates in peacekeeping operations, refer to DPO Protection of Civilians: Implementing Guidelines for the Military Component of UN Peacekeeping Operations (2023), and Guidelines on the Role of UN Police in Protection of Civilians (2017).
- 4 Child protection is the prevention of, and response to, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and violence against children.
- 5 UN Secretary-General's Bulletin, Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13), Policy on Gender Equality in UN Peacekeeping Operations (2010), Policy on Human Rights in Peace Operations and Political Missions (2011), UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on UN Support to non-UN Security Forces (2011), Policy for UN Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence (2019), Standard Operating Procedure for the Handling of Detention in UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2020), Policy on the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping (2023), and Policy on Gender-Responsive UN Peacekeeping Operations (2024).
- 6 Available at <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/The-Paris-Principles-En-1.pdf>.
- 7 Available at <https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/>.
- 8 Available at https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/principles-vancouver-principes.aspx?lang=eng
- 9 Available at <https://ewipa.org/the-political-declaration>.
- 10 The United Nations General Assembly created the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in 1996 (A/RES/51/77).
- 11 For more information on the Working Group, see Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict | Security Council. <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/subsidiary/wgcaac>"Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict | Security Council.
- 12 Customary international humanitarian law consists of rules that come from a 'general practice accepted as law' and exist independently of treaty law. For more information on customary international humanitarian law, see <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl>.
- 13 Canadian Red Cross, Children and War Toolkit (2011).

- 14 Under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000), States must ensure that persons who have not attained the age of eighteen years are not compulsorily recruited into their armed forces, while armed groups should not, under any circumstances, recruit persons under the age of eighteen years. In addition, Additional Protocol I and the CRC require that, in recruiting persons between fifteen and eighteen, priority be given to the older ones. See <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule136>
- 15 According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), a child is every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
- 16 Rome Statute: Art. 8 (2)(b)(xxvi) and 8 (2)(e)(vii).
- 17 Adopted by General Assembly resolution 40/33 of 29 November 1985.
- 18 Adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/110 of 14 December 1990.
- 19 Adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/112 of 14 December 1990.
- 20 Adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/113 of 14 December 1990.
- 21 Recommended by Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/30 of 21 July 1997.
- 22 Adopted by Economic and Social Council Resolution 2005/20 of 22 July 2005.
- 23 For more information about UN military mission planning directing documentation, plans and orders, refer to the UN Deployed Military Field Headquarters Handbook (2023), and for UN Police mission planning processes and documents, refer to UN Manual on Mission-Based Police Planning in Peace Operations (2017).
- 24 Force Commander's and Police Commissioner's Directives are intended for UN peacekeeping operations with a sizeable military and/or UN Police component and with an explicit child protection mandate and dedicated civilian child protection capacity.
- 25 CPFPs should possess specific capabilities, specialised skills, and experience required to effectively implement child protection responsibilities. This includes a strong understanding of international standards and UN mandates on children and armed conflict, the ability to identify, report and respond to grave violations against children, and the capacity to integrate child protection considerations into military and police operations. They should also be able to engage with various stakeholders, conduct assessments, and address the unique vulnerabilities of children in conflict settings.
- 26 Guidance provided in the Policy is complemented by additional guidance on the child protection focal points system developed since 2017 in collaboration with the Office of Military Affairs, the Police Division, and civilian and uniformed personnel in missions. See Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), Annex 5c Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection, and Template of Police Commissioner's Directive on Child Protection (2024).
- 27 Please refer to Chapter 3: Coordination and Collaboration with Other Stakeholders for further information. To learn more about the roles and responsibilities of child protection staff in UN peacekeeping, see Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023).
- 28 The UN Deployed Military Field Headquarters Handbook (2023) currently recommends that a dedicated Military Protection Advisor be appointed at Force headquarters/Sector headquarters and/or Battalion level to support military leadership and coordinate child protection, conflict-related sexual violence and human rights activities.

- 29 Refer to the UN Deployed Field Military Headquarters Handbook (2023), Chapter 7, Section 7.4 about the Military Decision-Making Process.
- 30 The reporting and information-sharing chart regarding violations against children is available in Annex B of the Sample Force Commander's Directive on Child Protection; DPO-DPPA Handbook for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations (2023).
- 31 Such as SAGE and Unite Aware.
- 32 In UN peacekeeping operations with POC mandates, POC Advisers and focal points provide support and guidance on the implementation of the POC mandate, facilitate the development and implementation of the mission POC strategy, coordinate all POC efforts undertaken by all mission components and ensure that POC concerns are mainstreamed and prioritized within the missions.
- 33 In UN peacekeeping operations with CRSV mandates, Senior Women's Protection Advisers and Women's Protection Advisers lead the implementation of the CRSV protection mandate, supporting the mission in preventing and responding to CRSV.
- 34 In UN peacekeeping operations with human rights mandates, human rights components, led by the Director of human rights/Head of the human rights component, implement the human rights related mandates given to the mission. In some missions, child protection functions are consolidated within the human rights component.
- 35 There are no individual terms of reference for child protection focal points at Battalion headquarters, Company headquarters, and sub-unit level. Existing guidance addresses Battalion, Company and sub-unit levels together (see the template of Force Commanders' Directive on Child Protection, 2023).
- 36 See UN Deployed Military Field Headquarters Handbook (2023). The Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), in its annex 5a, refers to the Military Information Staff Branch as the document was issued prior to the issuance of the Deployed Military Field Headquarters Handbook.
- 37 See also Chapter 6: Dealing with Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Such as the UN Sage database and/or Unite Aware.
- 41 For further information on supporting the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children and the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), see Chapter 4: Supporting Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations Against Children.
- 42 The template of Force Commander's Directive is included in the Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023). Both templates are available on the Policy and Practice Database: https://unitednations.sharepoint.com/sites/PPDB/SitePages/Child_Protection.aspx.
- 43 Other missions that wish to issue guidance on child protection for military or police personnel should adapt this template to reflect their mission mandate, structure and deployment, the specific characteristics and size of the military or police component, and the child protection component (where present), among others. In situations where dedicated child protection capacity is not present, the child protection lead in the mission (often the human rights component) should be involved in the development and implementation of mission-level guidance on child protection for UN military and police personnel in coordination with the DPO Child Protection Team at headquarters.

- 44 United Nations peacekeeping operations with a mission-specific Security Council mandate on child protection usually have dedicated civilian child protection staff. In situations where dedicated child protection capacity is not present, the child protection lead in the mission (often the human rights component or, in some cases, a child protection focal point in another civilian component) will discard child protection tasks and responsibilities in coordination with the Child Protection Team in the UN Department of Peace Operations.
- 45 This case study has been taken from the Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Police (2023), Module 5: How to Collaborate on and Coordinate Child Protection in a United Nations Peace Operation, available at: <https://peacekeepingre-sourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/cp-police>
- 46 The modalities for cooperation between military and police are broadly outlined in the Policy on Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2019), and the respective guidelines on military and police command and operations, including provisions on the primacy of each actor in different broadly defined circumstances.
- 47 For more information on the roles and responsibilities of child protection staff, refer to the Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017).
- 48 See also monitoring and reporting roles and responsibilities of FHQ CFPF and PHQ CFPF, respectively.
- 49 For an example of a UN peacekeeping mission Protection of Civilian coordination structure, see the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook (2020), page 62.
- 50 Civilian child protection staff participate in the MARA working group to facilitate information exchange and coordinated action on incidents of conflict-related sexual violence against children. For more information about monitoring, analysing and reporting on conflict-related sexual violence, and the MARA working group, see the Handbook for UN Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence (2020), Chapter 7.
- 51 In mission settings, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that carry out operational activities for development, emergency, recovery, and transition constitute the UN Country Team (UNCT). Several members of the UNCT operating at the field level have a protection mandate. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) is led and chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). The HCT is composed of organisations that undertake humanitarian action in-country and that commit to participate in coordination arrangements. It should include UN agencies, national and international non-governmental organisations and, subject to their individual mandates, components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- 52 Such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Note that the UN agencies, funds and programmes present in the mission area might vary from country to country and also within the country.
- 53 These may include international organisations such as Save the Children, World Vision, Plan International, OXFAM, and the Norwegian Refugee Council, as well as local NGOs and civil society organisations.
- 54 Clusters are described as groups of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action. Each cluster has clear responsibilities for coordination, promote partnerships between all relevant actors, and strengthen

accountability for humanitarian responses. The protection cluster is led by UNHCR, while the child protection area of responsibility, which comes under the protection cluster, is led by UNICEF. For more information, see the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action (2016).

- 55 Also known as the Child Protection Area of Responsibility.
- 56 For more information, see Chapter 4: Supporting Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations against Children.
- 57 To ensure long-term sustainability, the Government of the host-country should be a key partner/owner in DDR processes for children. The level of responsibility and national ownership will depend on the context and/or the terms of the peace accord (if one exists). Appropriate ministries, such as those of education, social affairs, families, women, labor, etc., as well as any national DDR commission that is set up, shall be involved in the planning and design of DDR processes for children. See UN Integrated DDR Standards, Module 5.20: Children and DDR.
- 58 In a mission context with a peacekeeping operation, the provision of security around disarmament and demobilization sites will typically be undertaken by the military component. However, the presence of UN Police personnel at these sites can also help to reassure local communities. For example, regular Formed Police Units (FPU) patrols in cantonment sites are a strong confidence-building initiative, providing a highly visible presence to deter crime and criminal activities. This presence also eases the burden on the military component of the mission, which can then concentrate on other threats to security. See UN Integrated DDR Standards, Module 5.20: Children and DDR.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 External, area and proximity security at demobilization sites shall be provided by military and/or police forces (national and/or international), while internal security at demobilization sites should be provided by lightly equipped local security services or police. See UN Integrated DDR Standards, Module 4.20: Demobilization.
- 61 In some situations, the UN can establish alternate arrangements to strengthen MRM activities, such as a Working Group on CAAC.
- 62 Global Horizontal Notes (GHN) are confidential quarterly reports that provide updates and alerts on the situation of children affected by armed conflict.
- 63 The level of NGO engagement in the CTFMR is determined by the NGOs themselves, based on the specific country context. These NGOs must be neutral, impartial, and independent. National government representatives are not members of the CTFMR.
- 64 Handover protocols are agreements by governments or armed groups to swiftly transfer children allegedly associated with armed forces and armed groups in their custody, or whom they have encountered, to child protection actors for appropriate support services. For a template of a handover protocol, see Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023), Annex 7.
- 65 For more information on children associated with armed forces and armed groups, see Chapter 6: Dealing with Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups.
- 66 Please note that a Guidance Note on Denial of Humanitarian Access is currently being finalized and is expected to be released in April 2025. For the purpose of the Guidance Note, denial of humanitarian access is understood as 'the blocking or significant hindrance of humanitarian aid and services indispensable to children's survival by parties to conflict'.

- 67 Recognizing the challenges of establishing intentionality, information related to intent should be captured (when available) along with other incident-related details.
- 68 Disabilities can make children vulnerable to the potential risks and impacts of all six grave violations. The disability status of a child can be considered when reporting grave violations to the Child Protection Section/Unit, if feasible. Under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) 'persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (article 1). UN uniformed personnel are not qualified to assess the disability status of an individual, including a child, in particular with regards to disabilities of a mental or intellectual nature, but can bring information that they deem relevant to the attention of the Child Protection Section/Unit.
- 69 These annexes identify parties to the conflict responsible for grave violations against children (killing and maiming, recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction, and attacking schools or hospitals). There is no listing for denial of humanitarian access.
- 70 See Handbook for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations (2023), Annex 7, for the sample Protocol for the Handover of Children in Custody Owing to Their Association with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.
- 71 Joint Protection Teams (JPTs) consist of uniformed personnel and civilian experts who engage with communities to assess threats, share information, and develop practical solutions to protection issues, enhancing mission planning and coordination.
- 72 Community Liaison Assistants work closely with uniformed and civilian personnel to support them in engaging with the local population and improve their understanding of the local context and dynamics, including local early warning and protection systems.
- 73 For more information, see <https://uniteaware.un.org/>.
- 74 Available at: [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Child%20Protection/2023.03%20Handbook%20for%20Child%20Protection%20Staff%20in%20United%20Nations%20Peace%20Operations.pdf)
- 75 See Policy on Casualty Evacuation in the Field (2020). In accordance with international humanitarian law, the UN is required to treat members of hostile forces and civilians injured by UN forces, including children, within the capacity of the UN health system where alternate hostile force or civilian health capability is not immediately available.
- 76 For further guidance, please refer to the Standard Operating Procedure on the Handling of Detention in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2020), in particular its Annex B on special considerations for children, or superseding guidance.
- 77 Children and DDR (Module 5.20) of the UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) (2021), offers guidance on preparing for and responding to the specific needs of children during DDR processes.
- 78 Release includes the process of formal and controlled disarmament and demobilization of children from an armed force or group as well as the informal ways in which children leave by escaping, being captured or any other means. Release is not dependent on children having weapons to forfeit.

- 79 This exercise is based on the 'Explore the Dilemma Scenarios' which include case studies or scenarios that are used to explore the various dilemmas faced by both combatants and humanitarian workers; Module 3: The Law in Action – From the Perspective of Canadian Soldiers and Humanitarian Workers, Canada & Conflict: A Humanitarian Perspective, Canadian Red Cross.
- 80 Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017).
- 81 Handbook for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2023).
- 82 See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/standards-of-conduct>.
- 83 See <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/response>.
- 84 Secretary-General's Bulletin, Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, 9 October 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13).
- 85 In its resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the UN Security Council called upon parties to the conflict listed in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict to develop and implement Action Plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.
- 86 This chapter does not intend to provide a detailed exploration of the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP). It draws upon key principles from the MDMP to guide the integration of child protection considerations into military planning and operations. For more detailed information about the planning of UN military operations and UN Military Decision Making Process, refer to the UN Infantry Battalion Manual (2020), Chapter 2.
- 87 This prohibition also applies to UN Police personnel.
- 88 See Policy on United Nations Police in Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions (2014).
- 89 This chapter does not intend to provide a detailed exploration of the UN Police operational planning cycle. It draws upon key principles from it to guide the integration of child protection considerations into police planning and operations. For more detailed information about the planning of UN Police operations, refer to the UNPOL Manual: Mission-based Police Planning in UN Peace Operations (2017).
- 90 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system (CRC/C/GC/24*), 18 September 2019, paragraph 24.



Members of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) Portuguese contingent patrol the Becora district of Dili, accompanied by a group of local children, March 2000. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.

United Nations
Department of Peace Operations

