

MODULE 1, LESSON 1

LEARNER’S HANDOUT

Gender Analysis of the Six Grave Violations against Children

Girls and boys experience conflict differently and present different vulnerabilities to grave violations perpetrated by armed forces and groups. Understanding who is affected and how can inform our prevention and response strategies and plans, to better address the specific needs of boys and girls. Here is some analysis of the plight of boys and girls in armed conflict through a gender lens, based on the data gathered through the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

In 2022, the United Nations verified 27,180 grave violations, affecting 18,890 children (**13,469 boys, 4,638 girls, 783 unknown gender**). One in four child victims of grave violations were girls, compared to one in three in 2021. At least 4,638 girls endured one of the four grave violations, compared to 13,469 boys. Girls were mostly affected by killing and maiming, followed by abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and recruitment and use

(Reference: Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/77/895–S/2023/363), which covers the period from January to December 2022).

As United Nations military personnel, you should be keenly aware of these gender differences.

1. Killing and Maiming

- 75 percent of killing and maiming affected boys

In many contexts, boys have greater freedom of movement and spend more time outside the house, including to go to schools, which places them at higher risk of being caught in crossfire, exposed to attacks on schools and becoming victims of explosive remnants of war. They are also particularly targeted by armed actors because they are more often perceived as a threat than girls. Conversely, girls carry out domestic and agricultural tasks such as firewood and water fetching, exposing them to roadside attacks and sexual violence.

Afghanistan: A total of **732 boys and 177 girls** were killed and maimed, mainly as a result of explosive ordnance and targeted killings.

Central African Republic: A total of **47 boys and 33 girls** were killed and maimed, mainly caused by gunshots and explosive remnants of war.



Democratic Republic of the Congo: The United National verified the killing and maiming of **445 boys and 254 girls**, with casualties resulted mainly from targeted attacks, crossfire, explosive ordnance, torture and attacks on schools.

Mali: A total of 245 children (**172 boys, 59 girls and 14 sex unknown**) were killed and maimed, with most casualties resulted from gunshot during attacks on villages, and explosive ordnance.

2. Recruitment and Use

- 85 percent of children recruited and used were boys

Boys are primarily recruited for combat and support roles and are more likely than girls to receive weapons and military training. Girls are also recruited and used, mainly in support roles such as cooks, cleaners, sex slaves and child brides. In some situations, girls are involved in hostilities as combatants, weapon cleaners, or carriers of improvised explosive devices.

Central African Republic: A total of **111 boys and 23 girls**, some as young as 7, were recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups. Forty boys served in combat roles. Children also were used as cooks, porters, for fetching water and at checkpoints.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: The recruitment and use of **1,293 boys and 252 girls** by armed forces and armed groups were verified. Children were used in support roles, in combat, as guards, spies and fetish keepers. In addition, **958 boys and 195 girls** were recruited in previous years and used until their separation in 2022.

South Sudan: The recruitment and use of **107 boys and 3 girls** were verified. Children were used in combat, and as bodyguards, porters and cooks.

3. Abduction

- 66 percent of abductions affected boys

Abduction primarily affects boys, including for the purpose of recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups. Girls are often abducted for the purposes of sexual slavery, rape, forced marriage, but also to be used as suicide bombers. The fear of abduction alone can lead to families limiting education opportunities for girls.

Central African Republic: The abduction of **40 boys and 39 girls** were verified, most of whom were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use and/or sexual violence.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: A total of **469 boys and 261 girls** were abducted for recruitment and use, including as porters and for the purposes of extortion, sexual violence, and torture.

Mali: The abduction of **90 boys and 19 girls** were verified, mostly for recruitment and use and /or sexual purposes.



4. Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence

- 99% of sexual violence was perpetrated against girls

Girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage. Boys are frequently subjected to sexual violence particularly in detention settings. Sexual violence in conflict is the most underreported grave violation due to associated stigma, and among boys, it is proportionately greater – boys notably face barriers to reporting sexual violence, owing to factors such as cultural taboos, harmful social norms, association with emasculation, or fear of persecution.

Central African Republic: Sexual violence was committed against **75 girls** by armed forces and groups.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Sexual violence was perpetrated against **283 girls and 1 boy**; cases involved rape, forced marriage, gang rape, sexual slavery and attempted rape.

South Sudan: Sexual violence was perpetrated against 94 girls, as young as 7, by armed forces and groups.

Somalia: Sexual violence was committed against **219 girls and 2 boys** by armed forces and groups; cases included rape, attempted rape and forced marriage.

5. Attacks on Schools or Hospitals

Where schooling is not co-educational, boys’ schools may be more vulnerable to attack for recruitment, while girls and female teachers may be more vulnerable to attacks based on ideology. Girls are often at risk of threats of attacks, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abduction at school and on the way to and from school. The consequences of attacks on schools have long-term implications for both boys and girls, although the destruction and closure of schools can exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities of educational access at all levels. When adolescent girls drop out of school, they usually take on domestic labour and family care responsibilities, while boys are likely to drop out of school to find work and support their families or join parties to conflict for security or protection.

Attacks on hospitals cause destruction and closure of fully functioning medical facilities, hindering both boys’ and girls’ access to life-saving services and care.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: There were a total of **108 attacks** on schools (70) and hospitals (38), and on protected persons. **13 schools** were used for military purposes by the armed forces and groups.

Mali: A total of **97 attacks** on schools (83) and hospitals (14), including protected personnel were verified.

South Sudan: A total of **62 attacks** on schools (51) and hospitals (11), and the military use of **24 schools and 2 hospitals** by armed forces and groups were verified.

6. Denial of Humanitarian Access

The impact of the denial of humanitarian access for children may differ based on their gender and that it increases the vulnerability of boys and girls in different ways. Girls are mostly affected by movement restrictions, which would imply, additional challenges in accessing areas of



distribution of humanitarian aid. Boys could be perceived as associated with an opposing party and therefore denied access by local actors facilitating the distribution of humanitarian assistance.

Central African Republic: The United Nations verified **50 incidents** of denial of humanitarian access.

Mali: The United Nations verified **85 incidents** of denial of humanitarian access.

