

Lesson

3.1



Interacting with Children

The Lesson



Starting Module 3: Operational Framework and Lesson 3.1



For an interactive start to lesson 3.1, ask learners:

Why is the way/manner you interact with children in the mission area important?

OVERVIEW

Module 3 will show how the child protection frameworks discussed in Module 2 translate into standard operating procedures and actions of the military component in the field. The topics covered in this module are important in the context of the child protection training that troop-contributing countries provide in preparation for deploying their forces to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Learners should gain an understanding of why these topics are important, and how they can affect their peacekeeping duties in the mission.

Lesson 3.1 covers interaction with children. It should be conducted in a group discussion format so as to engage learners in the subject matter from the outset and ensure the broadest possible participation by all learners.

The trainer's role is to share knowledge, experience, personal views and opinions on the topics, using an adult-education technique. In this way, learners will be able to express their views based on their own cultural perspectives, understand that there may be different interpretations of a situation, and become aware of United Nations rules and regulations that apply to United Nations missions.

Distribute the presentation to learners at the end of the discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain how culture affects a peacekeeping personnel's attitudes and behaviours towards children
- Discuss the United Nations code of conduct related to children, and the consequences of misconduct
- Explain the guiding principles on dealing with children
- Recognize the ethical obligations of peacekeeping personnel in protecting children

ACTIVITIES

Group Discussions

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse: prevention and response
2. Interaction with children: child protection or community outreach?
3. Scenario: Supporting an orphanage

Case Studies

1. Four case studies on what to do when dealing with children


HANDOUTS (FOR LEARNERS)

1. DPKO-DFS-DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations
2. When Interacting with Children – Dos and Don'ts

SLIDE 1: MODULE 3, LESSON 1: INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN



Module 3, Lesson 1 INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN

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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

- ☞ *An appropriate subtitle for this module would be “Culture, Attitude, Behaviour, Code of Conduct, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse”.*

SLIDE 2: LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning Objectives

- **Explain** how culture affects a peacekeeping personnel's attitudes and behaviours towards children
- **Discuss** the United Nations code of conduct related to children, and the consequences of misconduct
- **Explain** the guiding principles on dealing with children
- **Recognize** the ethical obligations of peacekeeping personnel in protecting children



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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: All peacekeeping personnel must be aware of and be able to apply the established guiding principles when interacting with children in the mission area.

Peacekeeping personnel have a very clear mandate and authority when it comes to child protection in the mission area. Ethical obligations, attitudes and behaviours can play a major role in how peacekeeping personnel implement the child protection mandate. This module covers the basic tenets guiding peacekeeping personnel's interactions with children in the mission area.

In this lesson, learners will consider their own cultural backgrounds and attitudes towards children, and how they may impact their behaviours towards children in the mission area.


It is important that they understand the importance of pre-deployment training and preparation of troops in relation to child protection in United Nations missions. Key elements can be found in DPKO/DFS/DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017), including the United Nations standards of conduct, zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuse (one of the most sensitive and important topics in peacekeeping operations) and the prohibition on child labour.

Finally, peacekeeping personnel must keep in mind certain key elements when interacting with children in mission areas. Those include understanding the differences between child protection activities, outreach and community engagement, and everyday interactions with children, and what is appropriate behaviour for peacekeeping personnel in each of these situations.

SLIDE 3: CULTURE, ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR

Culture, Attitude and Behaviour

- Cultural background and attitude play a major role in peacekeeping personnel's interactions with children and other civilians
- Behaviour that may be acceptable during peace time may lead to dangerous situations in times of conflict;
- Peacekeeping personnel should always consider the (potentially harmful) consequences of their actions when interacting with children


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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: What is culturally acceptable when interacting with children in one's country of origin may not be acceptable behaviour in the mission area.

- Cultural background – values and beliefs – can be a major influence on a peacekeeping personnel's attitude and behaviour towards children and civilians, in general. Being aware of the cultural differences between the peacekeeping personnel and the local population in mission areas is important to ensure that peacekeeping personnel always demonstrate respectful behaviour towards the populations they are protecting. In addition, it must be understood that behaviour that may be acceptable during peacetime may lead to dangerous situations in conflict settings.

☞ Ask learners to think of examples where cultural interactions may differ (e.g., communication between men and women, young and old, with colleagues/persons in a position of authority, and so on).


Peacekeeping personnel may not always be aware of the (potentially harmful) consequences of their actions when interacting with children. It is therefore important to adhere to the United Nations standards of conduct and the “Dos and Don'ts” outlined in this lesson.

SLIDE 4: UNITED NATIONS STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

UN Standards of Conduct

- United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines
- The highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity
- Zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and child labour
- Accountability of command



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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

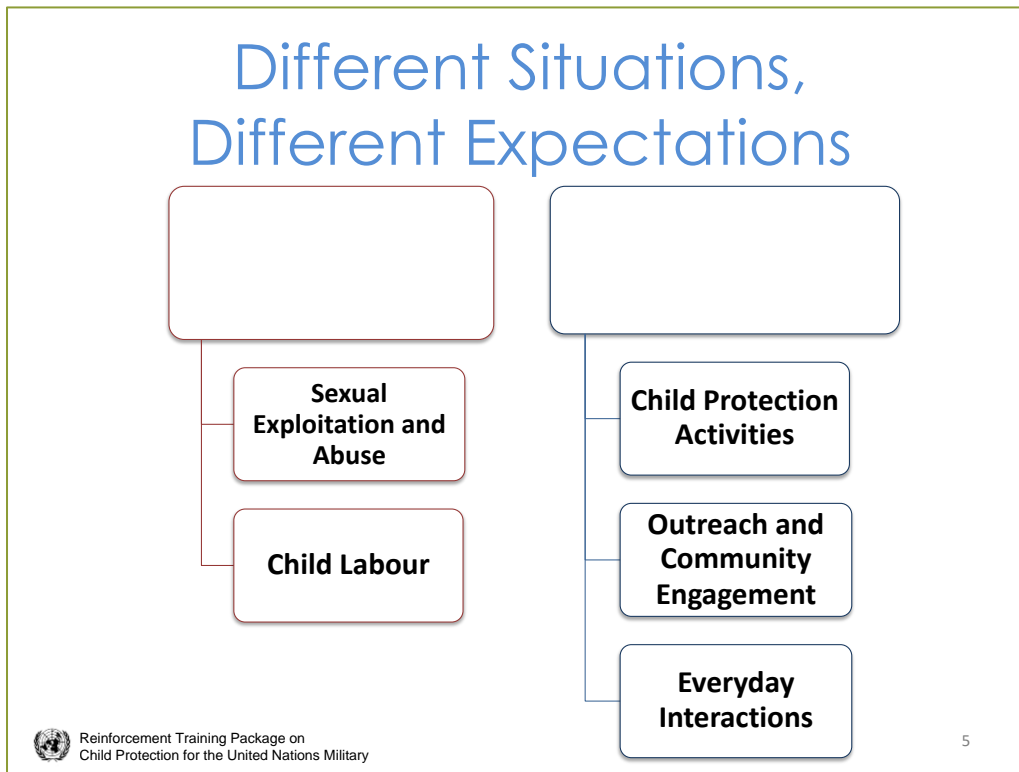
Key Message: Three guiding principles are at the core of United Nations military personnel's standards of conduct; they must be promulgated and enforced by commanders at all levels.

☛ The following guiding principles summarize the core values of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. They are universal standards applicable to all peacekeeping personnel – civilian, military and police – and must be borne in mind by every peacekeeping personnel:

1. Highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity must be upheld:

- Respect local laws, customs and practices
 - Treat host country inhabitants with respect, courtesy and consideration
 - Act with impartiality, integrity and tact
2. Zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and child labour
 3. Accountability of those in command and/or leadership who fail to enforce the standards of conduct

SLIDE 5: DIFFERENT SITUATIONS, DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS



NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: United Nations military personnel's primary child protection role in the mission is to ensure a safe and secure environment for children.

☛ In everything that military personnel do, in every interaction with children and communities, you must uphold the United Nations standards of conduct. Let us now focus on the nuances of your interactions with children in the mission area.

Zero tolerance

Red denotes activities that the United Nations **does NOT tolerate**. Any peacekeeping personnel who engages in these activities will face severe consequences: sexual

exploitation and abuse of children, and the use of children for purposes of labour (to be discussed in more detail subsequently).

Peacekeeping personnel are prohibited from having any sexual interaction with anyone under 18 years.

Positive interactions with children

At the other end of the spectrum are activities that military personnel should undertake to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse. These are the core activities of the child protection mandate aimed at helping and protecting children who may be in danger (to be discussed in more detail subsequently).

A distinction must be made between child protection activities, which are integrated into our usual security activities, and community outreach activities, which are intended to build confidence in the communities.

1. **Child protection activities:** When we integrate child protection into our usual security activities, such as when we patrol an area, we are undertaking child protection activities. Other child protection activities include monitoring and reporting grave violations, assisting with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, helping a child to leave an armed group, accompanying civilian Child Protection staff into the field to visit barracks or to verify reported grave violations.
2. **Community outreach and engagement activities:** Military personnel undertake many activities which might benefit children, but which are not considered child protection activities, such as organizing a soccer tournament for children in the local village. You are encouraged to work with the community to build confidence and foster acceptance of your presence in an area. These activities can be categorized as community outreach and engagement activities, often referred to as “winning the hearts and minds”. Quick-impact projects (QIPs) are activities that are often planned by military components in coordination with other actors (e.g., UNICEF, or other entities). Outreach activities differ greatly from your child protection role.
3. **Everyday interactions:** Military personnel have everyday interactions with children. These include encounters with children at the market, in the street, etc. In these situations, you need to be aware of local customs and of the fact that you are wearing a uniform, and behave in accordance with the United Nations standards of conduct.

SLIDE 6: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE – DEFINITIONS

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – Definitions

- **Sexual exploitation:** any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person.
- **Sexual abuse:** actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual exploitation and abuse constitute Category I serious misconduct



NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Sexual exploitation and abuse are Category I violations, that is serious misconduct for all United Nations personnel, and subject to disciplinary measures.

The Secretary-General gave the following definitions in his bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13):

Sexual exploitation: any actual or attempted abuse of a person's vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person.

Sexual abuse: the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Examples of sexual exploitation and abuse include:

- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18): mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence
- Any sexual relationship between personnel providing humanitarian assistance and protection and beneficiaries of such assistance
- Provision of any help or aid, such as food, clothing, lodging, in exchange for sexual favours
- Threatening to withhold any help or aid in exchange for sexual favours
- Purchasing sex from prostitutes, even in host countries where prostitution is legal
- Forcing a boy or girl to engage in sexual acts
- Rape
- Trafficking in persons for prostitution
- Procuring prostitutes for others


SLIDE 7: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE


Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Prohibited:

- Any act of sexual exploitation and abuse
- Using children to coordinate sexual activities with adults
- Other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse

Ignorance of a child's age is NO DEFENCE



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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Sexual activity with any person under 18 years is prohibited and constitutes serious misconduct; ignorance of a child's age is no defence.

☞ Ask learners what they consider to be acts of sexual exploitation and abuse?

🗨️ **The following are PROHIBITED:**

All acts of sexual exploitation and abuse: Kissing, touching, oral sex, penetrative sex, exposing your genitals, groping, taking pornographic photographs of children, purchasing sex from prostitutes, forcing a child (boy or girl) to engage in sexual acts, rape, trafficking of persons for prostitution, procuring prostitutes for others. **DO NOT** hug or touch a child, even to comfort them. There is no grey area.

Using children to coordinate sexual activities with women: Peacekeeping personnel are prohibited from using children for the purpose of coordinating sexual encounters with women. Examples include giving a child food in exchange for finding girlfriends; sending a child to arrange sexual encounters with women. Such activities are illegal and prohibited under any circumstances.

Other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse: Ask learners to give examples of other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. Those include taking photographs of naked children, exposing oneself to a child, sending sexually explicit text messages ("sexting"), sharing pornographic images with children online, among others.

Ignorance of a child's age is NO DEFENCE: Mistaken belief or not being aware of the age of a child **IS NOT** a defence for sexual exploitation and abuse.

SLIDE 8: REPORTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Reporting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

- UN personnel have a duty to report suspected misconduct and to cooperate with UN investigations
- Good faith reports supported by evidence; reports made to UN officials, to the Conduct and Discipline Team or to others in special circumstances
- Protection from retaliation provided for reporting misconduct or cooperating in investigations



(ST/SGB/2005/21, 19 December 2005)

NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: All peacekeeping personnel have a duty to report any suspected or observed misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse. Failure to report may constitute an act of misconduct in itself.


🗨 Reporting process

- Military personnel must report misconduct through the chain of command; you may also report misconduct directly to the Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT)
- All complaints and information on actual or alleged misconduct (for all categories of personnel) is channelled to the Conduct and Discipline Team
- Direct reporting to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is possible. All reports are confidential. Most missions have sexual exploitation and abuse focal points
- You can report misconduct in full confidentiality and you are protected from retaliation
- The Team reviews and assesses information to determine whether allegations of misconduct are credible
- The Team is responsible for tracking and follow-up of allegations
- The Team recommends notification and investigation of misconduct in accordance with applicable procedures
- The Team informs the Head of Mission through the Chief of Staff (component heads are informed as appropriate)


SLIDE 9: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE – CONSEQUENCES FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Consequences for the United Nations



- Negative impact on image and credibility of the mission and organization
- Affects mandate implementation
- Violation of national or international law
- Fosters a climate of impunity
- Affects security and personal health and safety
- Creates need for victim assistance

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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Sexual exploitation and abuse have an impact on the United Nations, the mission, fellow peacekeeping personnel and victims.

🗨 The consequences of (actual or alleged) sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or other misconduct can be dramatic and risk hindering the implementation of the political and operational mandate of the mission. The occurrence of such incidents compromises the reputation of the United Nations, in both the international arena and the host country. The duty of care of peacekeeping personnel could be questioned; the United Nations could be accused of failing to take responsibility for the suffering of victims and of fostering a climate of impunity for such acts by its personnel. That could, in fact and very concretely, put the security of all peacekeeping personnel at risk; open the way for all kinds of allegations against the mission and the Organization; and render the implementation of the mission's mandate more difficult.


👉 *Peacekeeping personnel are accorded certain immunities and privileges through various United Nations legal frameworks. These privileges and immunities are granted by the Secretary-General as part of the contract covering the performance of official duties and upholding the interests of the United Nations. Depending on the employment category (formal military contingent, United Nations military observer, civilian police, or other), immunities and privileges apply differently. Nonetheless, all*

peacekeeping personnel are liable to disciplinary action for misconduct and, in serious cases, criminal proceedings for violation of the standards of conduct.


SLIDE 10: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE – CONSEQUENCES FOR PEACEKEEPING PERSONNEL

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Consequences for Peacekeeping Personnel



- Disciplinary action
- Repatriation
- Termination of contract
- Criminal proceedings
- Financial liability

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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Peacekeeping personnel face severe consequences for sexual exploitation and abuse, including disciplinary action, dismissal, repatriation, and possible criminal proceedings.

🗨️ As already mentioned, sexual exploitation and abuse are considered major violations of the United Nations standards of conduct; the United Nations has a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Slide 10 shows some of the possible personal consequences for misconduct, depending on severity.

📖 *Overview of the scope of the issue: In 2022, a total of 79 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving personnel in peacekeeping and special political missions, were reported:*

- Of the 79 allegations, 58 involved military personnel, 5 police or other government provided personnel, and 16 civilian personnel

- 118 victims were associated with the allegations, of whom 91 were adults and 27 were children
- 18 of the allegations were related to sexual abuse of a child

For more detailed information and future updates to the data, see <https://conduct.unmissions.org/data>

🗨 Consequences: United Nations investigations are administrative in nature. If a uniformed personnel is alleged to have committed a crime, such as rape, the matter is referred to the appropriate Member State for a criminal investigation, following a preliminary assessment of the allegation by the United Nations. The United Nations can take only limited action against uniformed personnel (e.g., repatriation and barring from future service), and relies on Member States to take disciplinary and/or criminal action against such personnel. The consequences of misconduct are also determined by the privileges and immunities that the personnel enjoy. Uniformed personnel are liable to disciplinary action for misconduct, and even criminal proceedings for violations amounting to criminal acts under their national code of conduct.

👉 *Follow-up on 105 substantiated allegations involving police and military personnel, between 2017 and 2022:*

- The United Nations took administrative action involving uniformed personnel, resulting in the repatriation of 127 personnel on disciplinary grounds, and the barring of those personnel from participating in future field missions. The matters were also referred to the relevant Member States for appropriate disciplinary and criminal accountability measures
- Member States informed the United Nations of action taken, including the jailing of perpetrators (65 personnel), demotions, suspensions or dismissals of personnel from service (28 personnel), and financial sanctions (9 personnel)

Details of measures taken by the United Nations and Member States on allegations of misconduct reported between 2017 and 2022 can be found at <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Prevention and Response

- What makes children in conflict areas vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse?
- Explain the measures you can take as a Contingent Commander to ensure that the personnel under your command do not commit sexual exploitation and abuse.
- What possible impact can sexual exploitation and abuse have on your contingent and the mission?

NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: United Nations military personnel are responsible for their own behaviour; commanders are accountable for order and discipline.



Group Discussion

Divide learners into groups and allow them 15 minutes to discuss the points on slide 11 in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse. Each group should develop a presentation of its responses. One group should give its presentation in the plenary, and the other groups should add points to it.



Start the discussion by asking learners:

Now that you understand the definitions of sexual exploitation and abuse, how can United Nations contingent Commanders prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse?



Possible response:

Children in conflict areas are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse for a number of reasons, including but not limited to: poverty, being unaccompanied, orphaned, homeless (e.g., street children), living in an internally displaced persons or refugee camp without adult supervision, illiterate or poorly educated, no social networks, drug/alcohol addiction, etc.

The contingent Commander is accountable for the good order and discipline within the unit. The Commander can implement preventive and enforcement measures. For example:

Preventive actions:

- Ensure that conduct and discipline are adequately addressed during pre-deployment training
- Lead by example. Remember that all eyes are on you; if you are seen misbehaving, your troops will likely follow suit
- Follow up on allegations, rumours and complaints; you must ensure that these are looked into, even if for the purpose of clearing your troops from suspicion
- Provide welfare and recreation facilities – your country is being reimbursed for funds for this purpose
- Address issues relating to conduct, stress and performance before they lead to instances of misconduct
- Ensure that all personnel receive in-mission induction training upon deployment
- Seek support by utilizing the training structures of the mission (e.g., the Integrated Mission Training Centre)
- Advocate for upholding the United Nations standards of conduct and emphasize the positive impact of doing so
- Emphasize in your daily interaction with troops that misconduct will not be tolerated and will be sanctioned

Enforcement actions:

- Ensure that the personnel under your command are aware of the various reporting mechanisms available in the contingent and in the mission, and remind them of their duty to report all cases of misconduct
- Commanders are required to support investigative bodies in the event of misconduct
- Commanders and Officers must communicate to their troops and enforce preventive measures, such as mission-wide curfews and off-limit locations

SLIDE 12: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

NO SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITH ANYONE UNDER 18!

- Knowledge of the age of the child is not relevant
- It does not matter if the child gives consent
- ***Instruct the soldiers under your command accordingly***



NOTES (FOR TRAINER)


Key Message: No sexual activity with anyone under 18 years of age!

Note, in particular:

- Exchange of money, employment, goods, assistance or services for sex is strictly prohibited
- Use of children or adults to procure sexual services for others is prohibited
- Knowledge of the age of the child is not relevant; Ignorance of the age of the child is no excuse, nor does it not matter if the child consents to the act
- Instruct all soldiers under your command accordingly

SLIDE 13: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR CHILD LABOUR

Zero Tolerance for Child Labour



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SLIDE 14: ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY ON CHILD LABOUR

Zero Tolerance Policy on Child Labour

**DPKO-DFS-DPA Policy on Child Protection in
United Nations Peace Operations (2017)**


- Use of children under the age of 18 for the purpose of labour or other rendering of services is strictly prohibited
- Children are not allowed on the premises, in camps or in facilities of any UN peace operation for the purpose of labour or rendering of services


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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: All peacekeeping personnel are prohibited from using children for purposes of labour or rendering any services.

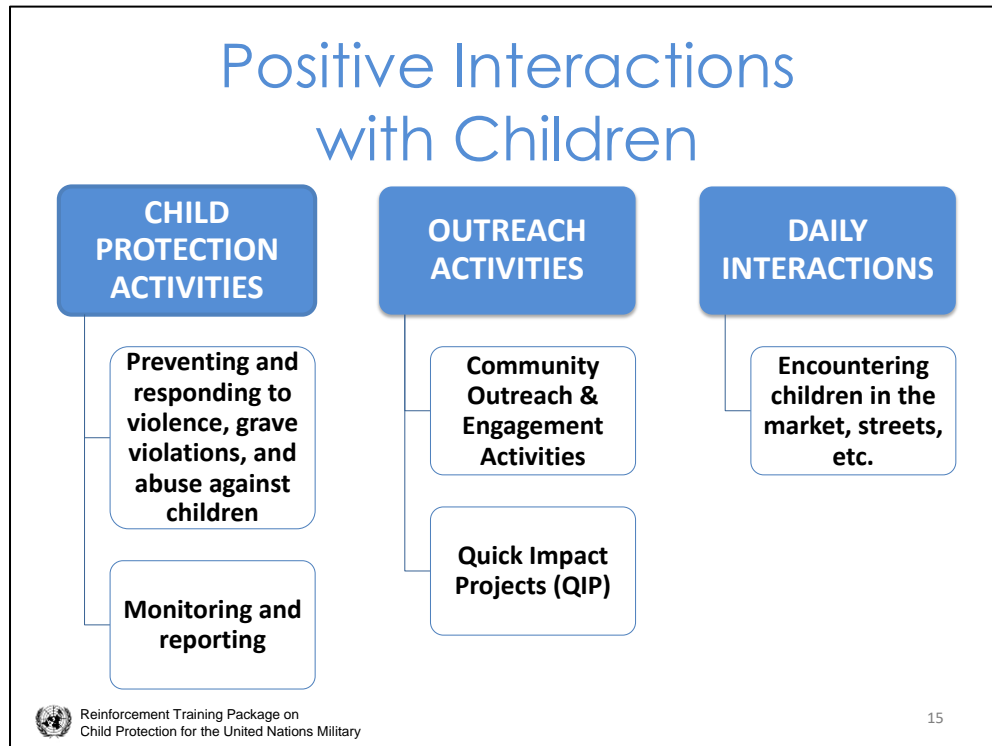
 *Most States have laws prohibiting child labour. Nonetheless, throughout the world, children can be seen, in large numbers, toiling in sweatshops, hauling concrete, tilling fields, gathering garbage or peddling shoes. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that there are at least 10 million children working in Africa alone.*

 The DPKO/DFS/DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations was updated in 2017 to include the prohibition of child labour (superseding the 2011 DPKO-DFS Policy on the prohibition of child labour in UN Peacekeeping Operations). According to the Policy, the use of children by United Nations peace operations or their personnel for purposes of labour or rendering other services is strictly prohibited. This rule applies regardless of the minimum age of employment in the host country, and irrespective of compensation (in the form of salary, food or other benefits).

A “child” is anyone below the age of 18 years. Peacekeeping personnel are strictly prohibited from using any person under the age of 18 years for labour purposes. Therefore, you cannot have anyone under the age of 18 working for you as a cook, cleaner, driver, or doing your laundry. That would be considered child labour. In addition, children are not allowed on United Nations premises or facilities to perform any tasks or render any service. For example, in many cultures, it is common for girls and boys to set up/work in stalls to sell milk or vegetables, clean shoes, wash cars or cut hair, etc. Such stalls are prohibited inside the camp, and must not be allowed outside the camp.

Handout: DPKO/DFS/DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017)

SLIDE 15: POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN



NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: In today's complex and often volatile peacekeeping environments, it is necessary to distinguish between child protection activities and community outreach activities in your interactions with children.

- It is important to distinguish between the child protection activities that are part of the mission's mandate, and other activities that support the mission's presence by contributing to "winning the hearts and minds" of the local population.


Let us first look at the mandated tasks, which are priority areas of work in child protection, then we will discuss the nuances in your interactions with children.

SLIDE 16: CHILD PROTECTION OR COMMUNITY OUTREACH?

Child Protection or Community Outreach?

Categorize the following activities under ***Child Protection***
or Community Outreach

1. Helping a child who escaped from an armed group.
2. Building a school.
3. Providing security to a Child Protection staff investigating a case of sexual violence against children.
4. Advising the armed forces of the host State not to use schools for their operations.
5. Organizing a soccer tournament for local children.
6. Reconnaissance to identify threats to children.

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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

**Group Discussion**

Conduct the discussion with the large group or divide learners into small groups, depending on time. Allow 5 minutes for small group discussions, then have the groups take turns reporting their answers. See answer key below and provide explanations as necessary.

Answer key

1	Helping a child who escaped from an armed group	Child protection (Peacekeeping force should coordinate with CP staff and use the agreed referral pathways to refer the child to designated child protection actors)
2	Building a school	Outreach (Good practice to inform CP staff)
3	Providing security for a Child Protection staff investigating a case/allegation of sexual violence against children	Child protection (Role of peacekeeping force, at the request of CP staff)


4	Advising the armed forces of the host State not to use schools for their operations	Child protection (If this situation is encountered, the peacekeeping force should also alert CP staff for follow-up action, or coordinate with CP staff on further action to be taken)
5	Organizing a soccer tournament for local children	Outreach (Good practice to inform CP staff)
6	Reconnaissance to identify threats to children	Child protection (In coordination with CP staff)

SLIDE 17: RESPONSES AND KEY ISSUES

Responses – Key Issues


- Helping a child who escaped from an armed group.
- Providing security to a Child Protection staff investigating a case of sexual violence against children.
- Informing the armed forces of the host State not to use schools for their operations.
- Reconnaissance to identify threats to children.


Done in conjunction with/at the request of the CP staff. Always alert and share information with the CP staff for follow-up action.



- Building a school.
- Organizing a soccer tournament for local children.
- Provide military escort to UN agencies/partners – when requested.
- Act of kindness with good intentions – always consider the possible negative consequences for children.

It is good practice to inform the CP staff before conducting such activities.



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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: United Nations military personnel have the most significant impact when they focus on child protection activities, rather than on outreach activities for children.

☞ *Review the answers to the questions, differentiating child protection, outreach, community engagement and other activities.*

Give a few examples, then ask learners to provide other examples.

RESPONSES

Child protection activities are part of the military component's mandate

1. Helping a child who has escaped from an armed group is a key task of military personnel to provide security and respond to violations against children. Make sure to immediately refer the case to the Child Protection staff for prompt specialist action.
2. Child Protection staff may request accompaniment when investigating cases of sexual violence or other grave violations. This is part of your role as military personnel and an important child protection activity.
3. Recruitment of children is a grave violation, as is sexual violence. Responding to these violations is a key child protection activity; such cases should be immediately referred to the Child Protection staff for action.
4. Attacks on a school is another grave violation under international humanitarian law. The use of a school by a military group makes it a legitimate target and prevents the education of children. It is the military personnel's responsibility to inform counterparts in the host State armed forces to vacate the school. Military personnel should also alert Child Protection staff and coordinate with them for follow-up actions.
5. Mainstreaming child protection into your regular military activities is the most efficient way for you to contribute to the child protection mandate (more on this in Module 3, lesson 2).

Outreach and community engagement activities support the mission's presence

1. Building a school would be considered an outreach/community engagement activity as it contributes to development of a country and would usually be done by development actors in coordination with the relevant national authorities. For example, a local community approaches the mission to request assistance with building/repairing a school. Considering it a way to build confidence and enhance acceptance, the mission may decide to submit a project proposal to the Quick-Impact Project (QIP) Review Committee. In this case, it is important to remember that the primary aim is not to protect children, but to create goodwill and enhance acceptance thereby facilitating implementation of the mission's mandate.

However, support to a local community should never be an isolated act and should be done in coordination with the relevant stakeholders, including competent local authorities and development partners. This will ensure that the school is a priority for the area, that it does not duplicate other efforts, and that it will be sustained by the State (resourced with teaching staff and equipment). While such a project has the potential to benefit the education of children in that

community, it does not constitute a child protection activity under the mission's mandate.

2. Other examples of outreach and community engagement activities include:
 - Organizing a soccer tournament
 - Assisting other United Nations agencies in their outreach work, such as distributing food, constructing/repairing schools or buildings, distributing Christmas gifts to children (as in Haiti)
3. What other examples can you think of when the United Nations military personnel might help the community?

4. Scenario: Imagine you are on a long-range patrol and come to a remote village with no medical facilities. A mother approaches you and asks for help because her child is ill.

Response: If you can, it is your responsibility to provide immediate assistance to the mother and child. Often, you will not be able to do so, which can be frustrating.

However, what you can do is refer the case to the civilian Child Protection staff, who is the focal point in the mission for child protection matters and who has access to a vast network of local child protection specialists. If it is not possible to reach the Child Protection staff, other civilian/child protection actors may be contacted (e.g., Human Rights Officers, Civilian Protection Coordinators, UNICEF).

Alternatively, you may inform an NGO, such as Doctors Without Borders, which might be present in the country and can go to the village to provide medical services. Whatever course of action you take in referring a case to a child protection specialist, it is critical to coordinate with/report the matter to the mission's civilian Child Protection staff.

5. For all of the situations that you will encounter in the course of your duties, although you may have good intentions to help the children and communities, it is imperative that you consider the possible (negative) consequences of your action, and go through the appropriate channels.

SLIDE 18: GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON CHILD PROTECTION

Guiding Principles on Child Protection

- ① **Do No Harm:** Avoid actions that may place children in danger
- ② **Best interest of the child:** Always place the interest of the child first before you act
- ③ **Coordinate and work with the experts:**
 - When in doubt, ask the civilian CP staff.
 - Always coordinate with and report cases requiring child protection to the CP staff.



NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Although you may take action in good faith, they could have unintended consequences; always consult with the mission's civilian Child Protection staff.

- Close proximity and relationship with locals, in particular children, could put children at risk of harm. A United Nations military personnel interacting closely with a child, even with good intentions, could render that child a target for harm.

Examples:

- A military personnel who allows a boy to have access to the mission compound or car may render the boy a target for use as a spy
- Military personnel assisting with supplying a local orphanage with surplus food and medical supplies, may render the orphanage a target for rebel groups seeking medicine and food (just as providing such supplies to children may make them targets).

Slide 18 shows the key guiding principles to be borne in mind when interacting with children in the mission area:

1. **Do no harm.** Always consider whether your interaction could have an adverse effect on the child/children you want to help. Ask yourself, if your action will place or expose the child/children to danger.
2. **Best interest of the child.** Always ask yourself, what consequences your action may have on the child/children, when you plan and conduct operations, in particular civil-military activities. This means that any action or decision that you make affecting the child/children require that due attention is given to their specific situation and protection risks. If you are not sure, ask the mission's civilian Child Protection staff.
3. **Coordinate and work with experts.** Every organization/component in the country has expertise in a specific area. E.g., peacekeeping personnel provide security, support host State institutions; other organizations specialize in providing aid to local communities, and so on. It is natural that you want to do more to help, and the way to do so is by working in coordination with other United Nations and non-United Nations actors on the ground.

 SLIDE 19: ACTIONS ILLUSTRATED

Actions Illustrated

Good intentions *can* backfire

- Example: supporting an orphanage

Good practices

- What UN peacekeeping personnel *can* do



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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Even well-intended outreach activities can do harm!



Scenario Discussions

These examples are based on real events. Read/have learners read aloud, the first two examples and highlight the guiding principles that were breached.

Read the good-practice scenario and lead a discussion on what the United Nations military component can do.

Example 1: Orphanage 1

The military personnel at one mission wanted to support a local orphanage that was run by a priest. They organized a fundraiser, collected money among themselves and their families at home and gave the money to the priest for the orphanage. Unfortunately, the orphanage was not registered with the host Government. There was no accountability for what the money was used for. What is worse, the orphanage never conducted proper family tracing of the children that it accepted. The orphanage was later accused of being involved in the trafficking of children to the neighbouring country.

Result: *Despite the best intentions, harm was done*

Example 2: Orphanage 2

United Nations military personnel from a particular country wanted to support the local orphanage in a conflict area. The orphanage took in children from all ethnic groups; they were very poor children. The military personnel thought they could help the orphanage by giving the children gifts. However, not all factions in the area liked the troop-contributing country. One night, the orphanage was attacked; the owner and two nurses were killed.

Result: *Good practice was not followed; all actions must be channelled through the appropriate coordination mechanisms*

Good practice: how the United Nations Military component can help

In South Sudan, United Nations military personnel in the mission area wanted to help a remote village by providing seeds to grow grain crops. South Sudan is affected by regular flooding and food shortages. However, UNMISS' mandate does not include providing food to the local community. Other organizations present do that and may not appreciate the mission duplicating their work.

Good practice: *Work/coordinate with local organizations and experts on actions that are not part of your specific mandate.*

What can the United Nations Military component do?

The mission partnered with a local NGO to supply the seeds. The name of the NGO was printed on the bags of seed and the mission arranged for transportation and assisted with the distribution of the seeds. Note that, although this was not a child protection activity per se, the military personnel's' assistance helped the community and benefited children. In conduct of all activities in the mission area, United Nations personnel must consider the "Do No Harm" principle.



CASES STUDIES

After reviewing the basic tenets relating to the different situations, ask learners to discuss the four cases/scenarios (slides 20-23).

Depending on time and preference, conduct these discussions with the entire group or divide learners into smaller groups. Allow 10 minutes for discussion, then have the groups present and discuss in plenary.

The trainer must be familiar with the DPKO/DFS/DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations, which covers sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as child labour.

Some questions have clear answers; for others, it is important for learners to express their views/comments based on their own culture and experience, and to learn from the experience of others.

All answers are welcome and can be useful for discussion and pedagogical purposes.

SLIDE 20: CASE STUDY 1 – WHAT TO DO?

Case Study 1 – What to Do?

As you are walking around the unit compound, you notice a UN officer talking to two teenage girls after giving them boxes of food. After a while, you see them in his car leaving the compound.



What should you do and why?

NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Slide 20 – This may be a case of sexual exploitation and abuse. As peacekeeping personnel, you have an obligation to report your observation.

- Case 1:** The scenario in slide 20 is based on actual incidents in the field, whereby peacekeeping personnel have sexually exploited girls and women in exchange for food or money. The United Nations has a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.


Appropriate response

Intervene if you can. Ask the officer what he is doing. If you see/suspect any type of inappropriate behaviour, report the incident to the appropriate person. You have an obligation to report an incident that could be a potential violation, even if you are not sure. If the situation is not clear, as in slide 20, seek advice from the Conduct and Discipline Focal Point. Children should not be on United Nations premises; you have an obligation to report the presence of children in/near the United Nations compound.

SLIDE 21: CASE STUDY 2 – WHAT TO DO?


Case Study 2 - What to Do?

You are deployed to a peacekeeping mission. A young boy from the village offers to sweep the military base, take out the trash and clean the cars for a small amount of money. He tells you that he will use the money to pay for his school fees.



that he will use the money to pay for his school fees.

What should you do and why?


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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Slide 21 – The United Nations prohibits any form of child labour.

- Case 2:** Allowing a child to perform any task or render any service, with or without compensation, constitutes child labour. It would imply that you are condoning child labour and exploiting the boy's vulnerable situation.

According to DPKO/DFS/DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations (2017):

The use of children by United Nations peace operations or their personnel for purposes of labour or other rendering of services is strictly prohibited, regardless of the minimum working age for child stipulated under national law in the mission area of operation, and irrespective of compensation (in the form of salary, food or other benefits) (para. 31).

Appropriate response


Explain to the boy that United Nations personnel do not employ children. It is also important to understand that giving money, no matter how small the amount, to children may lead to the expectation that UN peacekeeping personnel can solve their economic problems and to dependency. You should hire an adult to do work for you. If you want to help children with their education, you should inform the appropriate persons or agencies. Sharing information or contributing to United Nations funds, agencies or programmes is a more appropriate way to assist.


SLIDE 22: CASE STUDY 3 – WHAT TO DO?

Case Study 3 – What to Do?

You and some other military personnel are playing soccer during your off-duty hours. Some children are watching your game and ask if they can join you.

What should you do and why?



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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Slide 22 – Know your environment. Make sure that allowing children to participate in such activities does not have unintended consequences.

- **Case 3:** It very much depends on the situation. In some host countries, peacekeeping personnel are not perceived as impartial. A child who is seen as having access to you could be targeted or used as a spy. There have been cases of children seen with military personnel who were subsequently tortured by armed groups and forced to gather intelligence from the personnel.

Appropriate Response

Your primary consideration must be to “do no harm”. You must consider the possible consequences on the children if they are seen playing soccer with military personnel. You should tell the boys that you are on duty and children cannot play soccer with you at that time. If you would like to engage with the children in the community, work with a local NGO to organize tournaments. Seek guidance from the civilian Child Protection staff in the mission, and bear in mind that different cultures may view and respond to a situation differently.

SLIDE 23: CASE STUDY 4 – WHAT TO DO?


Case Study 4 - What to Do?

You have been deployed to MONUSCO as a Company Commander and you want to familiarize yourself with your area of responsibility since it is a new environment.

You are aware that an armed group has been terrorizing villages in the area, but you don't know which ones.

While on a familiarization patrol, two youths offer to take you to their village and serve as your guides and interpreters.

What should you do and why?


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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Slide 23 – Using children as guides constitutes child labour and is prohibited; such action may also place the children at risk of harm.


● **Case 4:** While there may be many good reasons for you to accept the boys' offer, you must not. The provision of goods and services by children to United Nations peacekeeping personnel is prohibited, irrespective of whether you pay for the service or not. In this case, the use of children by military personnel have bigger implications. They may be at risk of harm if they are seen helping you; or may be targeted in the event of an attack. Moreover, the definition of a child associated with armed forces and armed groups includes children used as porters, spies, or for other functions. Therefore, using a child for any purpose is contrary to the United Nations principles and would weaken the credibility of the United Nations. This also holds true for using children as interpreters.

Appropriate Response

Thank the child for his offer, but refuse. Ask an adult to show you around.

SLIDE 24: INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN – DOS and DON'TS (1)


Interacting with Children Dos and Don'ts (1)	
Do	Don't
Know your peacekeeping mission's mandate and role in protecting children. There are actors who can help, where the missions cannot (education, health, food, etc.)	Be discouraged if you cannot immediately help. If you report concerns, the responsible agencies can ensure that children are helped
Consider other options for community outreach aside from building schools and playing soccer	Engage in activities that may place children at risk, such as interactions at orphanages and schools, or in responses to poverty
Work with NGOs and local communities if you want to engage in community outreach activities with children	Be discouraged if you think the mission should do more. Your contribution to security is critical

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SLIDE 25: INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN – DOS and DON'TS (2)

Interacting with Children Dos and Don'ts (2)

Do	Don't
Consider the possible consequences of your actions on children. If you have doubts, ask the CP staff	Casually spend time or interact with local children
Explain to a child who wants money or work that you are not allowed to give money or work to children	Give money or food to or use children for any services or labour (e.g. cooking, cleaning, washing cars, etc.)
Report through the chain of command, and to the civilian Child Protection staff if you see relevant incidents	Have any sexual contact with children

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NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

Key Message: Slides 24 and 25 – Work closely with experts, do no harm, and always keep in mind the best interest of the child.

- United Nations military personnel should respect children's rights at all times and strictly adhere to the United Nations standards of conduct. Remember that, although some situations may not appear harmful at first, they may ultimately cause harm to the children or their families. Keeping in mind the "Dos and don'ts" of interacting with children can help you, as military personnel, make the right decision when confronted with these situations.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of the children should be your priority. The "best interest of the child" principle should guide all your interactions with children.

- ☞ *If time permits, the trainer may initiate/lead a short discussion on United Nations military personnel working with NGOs and humanitarian organizations.*

- Report incidents/observations through the chain of command and to the civilian Child Protection staff.

- Handout: Dos and Don'ts when interacting with children

SLIDE 26: TAKEAWAYS

Takeaways

- Peacekeeping personnel should be aware of how their own cultural background can influence their dealings with children and local communities, in order to avoid disrespectful or harmful behaviour
- Military personnel must abide by the relevant codes of conduct and other ethical standards when dealing with children in their mission areas
- Bear in mind the United Nation's zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and the prohibition of child labour.
- Always keep the following guiding principles in mind when interacting with children, and coordinate and work with the experts: ***“Do No Harm” and the “Best interest of the Child”***



Summary

Takeaways from Lesson 3.1:

- Peacekeeping personnel should be aware of how their own cultural background can influence their dealings with children and local communities, in order to avoid disrespectful or harmful behaviour
- Military personnel must abide by the relevant codes of conduct and other ethical standards when dealing with children in their mission areas
- Bear in mind the United Nation's zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and the prohibition of child labour
- Always keep the following guiding principles in mind when interacting with children, and coordinate and work with the experts:

“Do No Harm” and the “Best interest of the Child”

SLIDE 27: REFERENCES (1/2)

References (1/2)

- United Nations, DPKO-DFS-DPA Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations, 2017
- United Nations, DPKO (Integrated Training Service), Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials, 2017
- United Nations, Standards of Conduct and Zero Tolerance Policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/standards-of-conduct>)
- United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (A/77/748), February 2023

SLIDE 28: REFERENCES (2/2)

References (2/2)

- United Nations, The Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, October 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13)
- United Nations, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2019 (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/iasc-six-core-principles-relating-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>)
- Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles, 2019 (<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/vancouver-principles.html>)

SLIDE 29: QUESTIONS

Questions



NOTES (FOR TRAINER)

- ☞ Allow sufficient time for questions to be asked/answered. Actively encourage questions from learners.

