



Module 3, Lesson 1

INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN



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



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

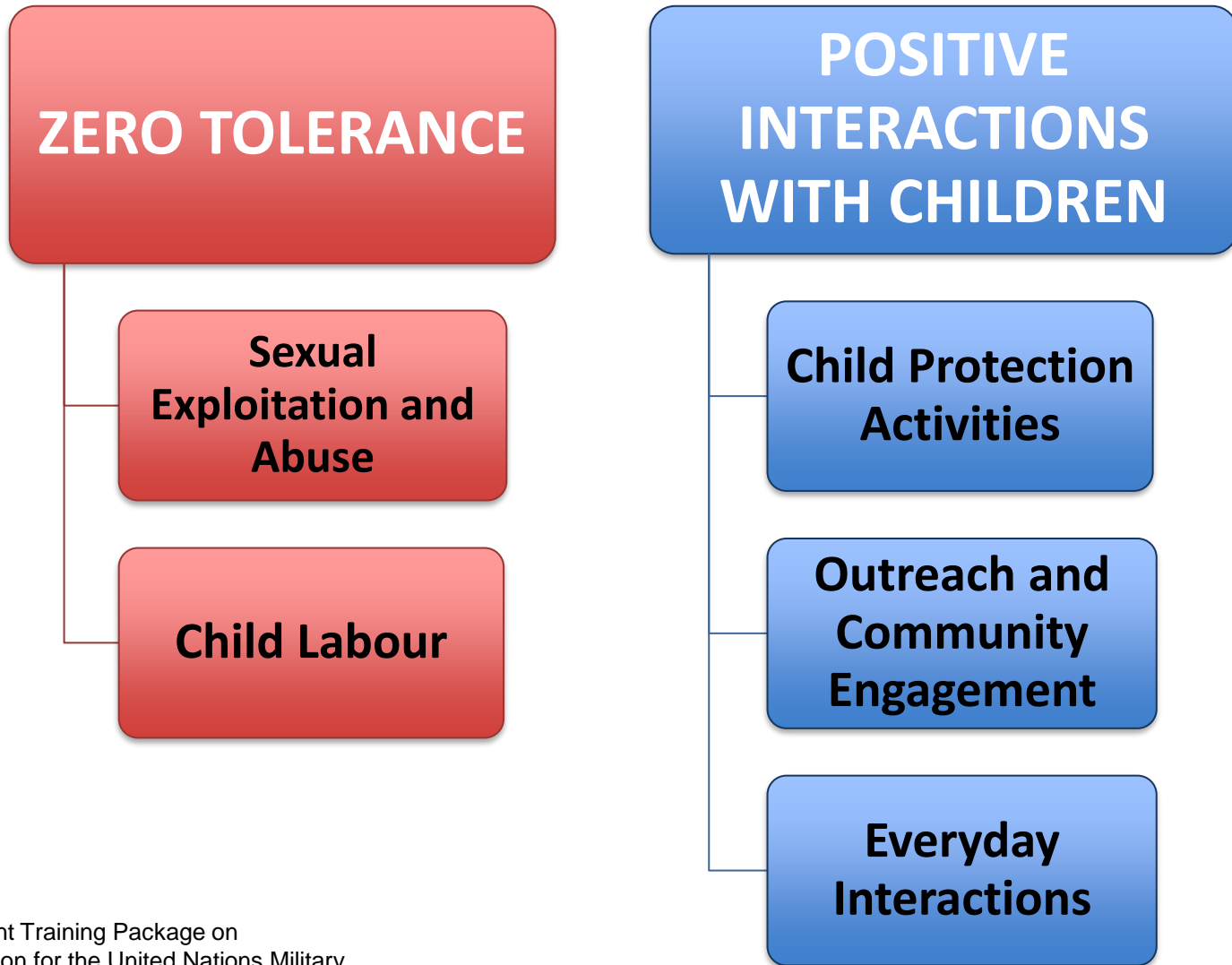


UN Standards of Conduct

- 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



Different Situations, Different Expectations



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*



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



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)



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



Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Consequences for Peacekeeping Personnel



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



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?



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***



Zero Tolerance for Child Labour



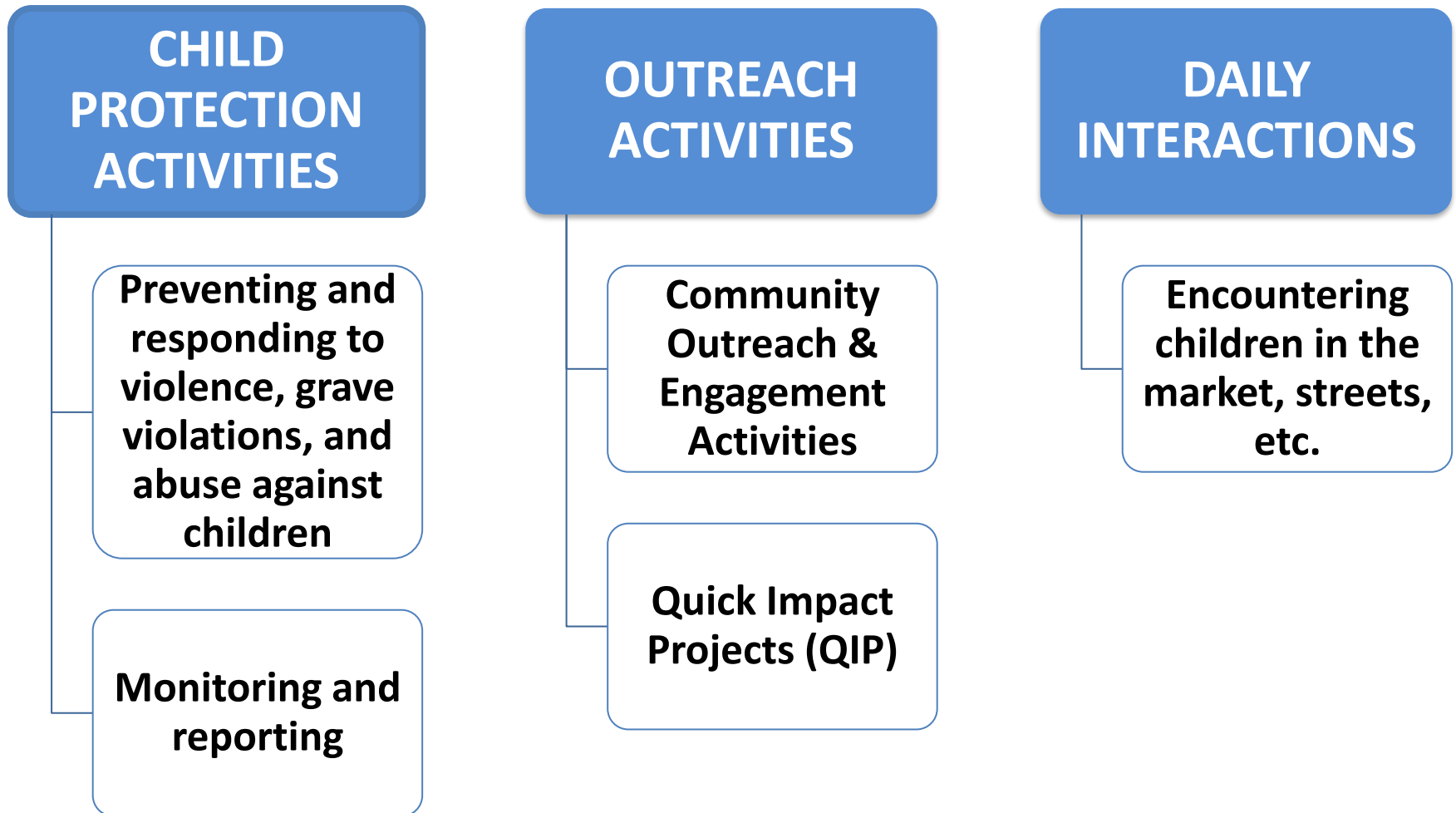
Zero Tolerance Policy on Child Labour

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



Positive Interactions with Children



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.



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.

CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES



- 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.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



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.



Actions Illustrated

Good intentions *can* backfire

- Example: supporting an orphanage

Good practices

- What UN peacekeeping personnel *can* 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?



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.

**What should you do
and why?**



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?



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?



Interacting with Children

Dos and Don'ts (1)

Do	Don't
<p>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.)</p>	<p>Be discouraged if you cannot immediately help. If you report concerns, the responsible agencies can ensure that children are helped</p>
<p>Consider other options for community outreach aside from building schools and playing soccer</p>	<p>Engage in activities that may place children at risk, such as interactions at orphanages and schools, or in responses to poverty</p>
<p>Work with NGOs and local communities if you want to engage in community outreach activities with children</p>	<p>Be discouraged if you think the mission should do more. Your contribution to security is critical</p>



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



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”***



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



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>)



Questions

