

MODULE 3

TRAINER’S ACTIVITY GUIDE

Role of Military Child Protection Focal Points Offensive Operations

AIM

The aim of this exercise is to enhance learners’ understanding of how military contingents may respond to situations at the tactical level to protect children’s rights and promote an integrated and comprehensive response to child protection in the mission area.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the role of the military component in support of child protection in the United Nations mission area, with regard to offensive operations at the tactical level
- Recognize appropriate military responses to realistic situations at the tactical level and identify legal sources of authority and obligation to take action
- Describe the operational framework for collaborating with host country forces and partners and the approach to be adopted to share concerns and take action, as appropriate
- Discuss the roles and functions of other mission components and external partners in dealing with child protection issues
- Recognize the processes and issues related to coordination among mission actors
- Identify the military tasks involved in an integrated mission response to mitigate the risk of grave violations against children

BACKGROUND

This scenario is based on a real-life event that occurred in 2017, involving MONUSCO, which had a mandate to conduct offensive operations at the time. Names and locations have been removed/altered.

MISSION-SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES/GUIDELINES

For the purposes of this exercise, use MONUSCO Force Commander’s Directive – Protection of Children by MONUSCO Force (2021), Mission “Y” Rules of Engagement, and other documents handed out during Module 2.

SETTING

The area of Beni bisects the boundary between North Kivu and Ituri provinces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The area has intensive agricultural land, intermixed with jungle forestry. The area produces large amounts of coffee, is abundant in natural resources, and relies on mining. The central city is Beni with smaller villages link to the main road by dirt tracks. Many villages are separated from the outside community and have little to no government interface.



Local teachers, village elders, female groups and priests play an important role in the communities. Infrastructure is very poor, and the area is easily infiltrated. Destructive forces, such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Patriotic Resistance Front of Ituri (known by its French acronym, FRPI), dissident splinter groups, and non-aligned armed groups harass the local population. MONUSCO Force has reinforced its presence in the area, but has not yet been able to isolate and neutralize the ADF and the FRPI. Elements of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (known by their French acronym, FARDC) have been conducting joint operations with the MONUSCO Force.

Recently, the ADF has been building up forces in the area in response to MONUSCO Force’s targeting of its smuggling operations, thus severely impacting its financial resources. The ADF has launched several probing attacks on UN bases, resulting in significant UN casualties; it is known for using children – often armed with rocks and machetes – as suicide waves in its initial attack; it operates through several temporary camps which are highly mobile. To support its raids, ADF’s fighter camps are separate from the logistics camps. The logistics camps contain the majority of ADF’s women and children.

SITUATION

You are the Force Child Protection Focal Point at Force HQ. You attended the morning briefing when the following flash report was presented by the U3 in the situation update brief:

Last night, a UN Patrol base was attacked by the ADF and forced to withdraw to Beni with casualties. It is assessed that the ADF could attack Beni in the next 72 hours.

The Force Commander has already been in a video teleconference with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Force Commander states that he/she has been authorized to order an immediate counter-attack to prevent the city of Beni from falling under ADF control. The Force Commander has therefore authorized immediate airstrikes and artillery fire on ADF positions.

The mission Senior Child Protection Adviser missed the morning briefing and speaks with you afterwards. The Senior CPA is concerned about the number of children in the armed group (as fighters, cooks and porters in the logistics camp) and stresses the need to minimize casualties during the offensive operations that are being planned.

As the Force Child Protection Focal Point, you take the Senior Child Protection Adviser’s concerns to the Force Chief of Staff, who says that the offensive operation must go ahead. The plan is to isolate the logistics camps, while striking the fighter camps. Mission staff are still in communication with the ADF leadership, trying to persuade them to cease their actions. The Force Chief of Staff wants you to:

- Focus primarily on what measures can be taken to reduce the impact on children and families in the armed group, both in advance of the attacks, but also once the attacks



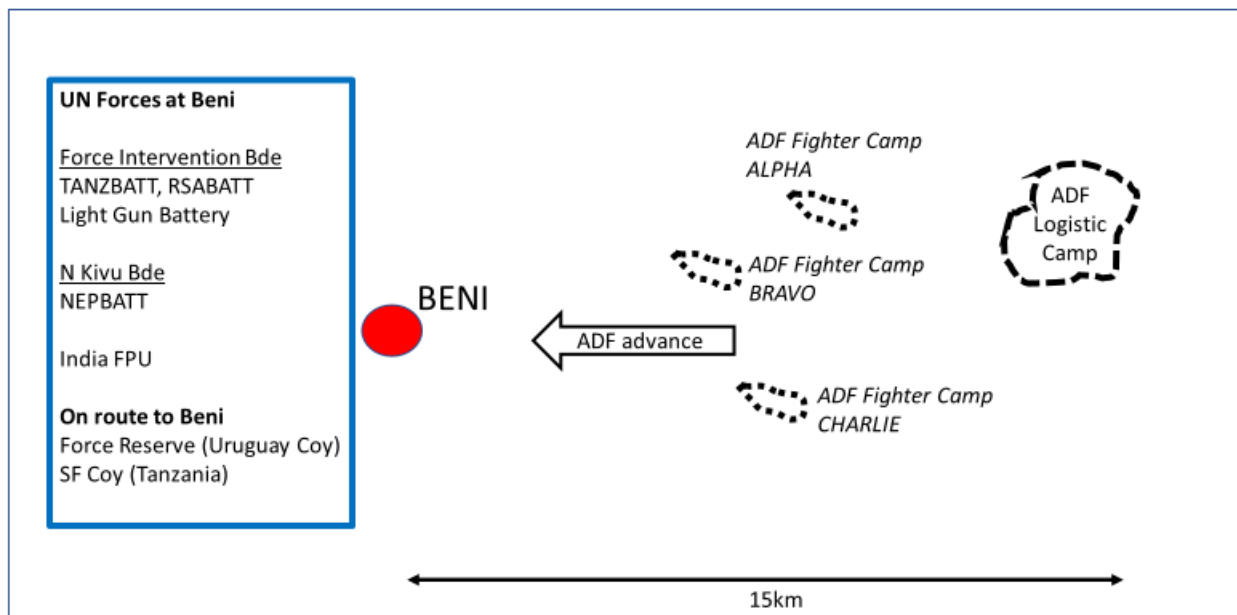
have begun, and after they have concluded the immediate operation

- Determine which control measures can be used for fires and manoeuvres.

The plan is still in its early stages; however, the first strikes will occur in the next 48 hours.

UN Forces in the area:

- Sector Centre forces are being re-deployed to protect Beni
- The Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) has two light-role infantry battalions in the sector, TANZBATT and RSABATT. The Brigade Commander intends to use these units to provide flank protection and isolate the logistics camps, so as to enable the Force Reserve Company (Uruguay) and SF Company to neutralize the fighter camps
- MONUSCO Force has eight attack helicopters, which will be conducting four strike runs per day
- The FIB has a battery of light guns, which will be used to support the operation
- Force unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) lines can be deployed within 24 hours



Other organizations in the area:

- The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have personnel on the ground operating from Beni
- Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are known to operate in the area of Beni, from time to time



REQUIREMENTS

On the basis of the situation described, learners, working in assigned groups, should discuss and analyse the scenario(s) and prepare a 10-minute presentation to be delivered in plenary to the Force Chief of Staff and the Senior Child Protection Adviser.

The presentation should address:

- 1) The legal basis and any policy guidelines on child protection that should inform the Force Commander’s decisions
- 2) Strikes (indirect fire) against the ADF that are already taking place. What actions should the mission and the Force take to reduce their impact on women and children in ADF camps during this phase?
- 3) UN ground operations will start shortly. How can the impact on women and children in ADF camps be reduced?
- 4) How can the impact on women and children in surrounding villages be reduced?
- 5) As a result of the operation, the Force is likely to have to take charge of a significant number of children associated with the ADF – at least for an initial period of time. What actions should be taken in that regard?

CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE

The groups have 120 minutes (2 hours) to discuss the situation(s), formulate recommendations and prepare the presentation/report. Each group will have 10 minutes to present their solutions in plenary. An additional 10 minutes should be allocated at the end to highlight the actions that were actually taken by Force HQ in a similar situation.

TRAINER’S NOTES

The exercise is intended to provide military Child Protection Focal Points with possible situations that they may experience at the operational level within Force HQ. The scenario is based on actual events in a specific mission.

Although the focus of the exercise is child protection, it is inevitable that protection responsibilities towards women in ADF camps and the local community be factored into the discussion and solutions.

Trainers should mentor/guide the discussion groups closely to ensure that learners understand the purpose/aim of the exercise and stay focused on the issues to be addressed. The **primary objective, from an adult-education perspective**, is that learners think, discuss and reach a solution based on their experience and knowledge acquired in the training course.

The trainer(s) should emphasize the different approaches to mitigating the impact of military actions against the ADF on children, women and local communities.



- 1) Explain the legal basis and any policy guidelines on child protection that should inform the Force Commander’s decisions.
 - a) **IHL: Additional Protocol II (Article 4 (3)) to the Geneva Conventions sets out the principle of special protection for children:** “Children shall be provided with the care and aid they require, and in particular: ... (c) Children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups, nor allowed to take part in hostilities; (d) The special protection provided by this Article to children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall remain applicable to them if they take a direct part in hostilities ... and are captured; (e) Measures shall be taken ... to remove children temporarily from the area in which hostilities are taking place to a safer area within the country...”
 - b) **SC resolution 1612 (2005):** Identifies the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict as a grave violation
 - c) **Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict (Article 4):** “Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit [whether on a compulsory or voluntary basis] or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years”
 - d) **CRC (Article 38.2):** “States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities”
 - e) **MONUSCO’s child protection mandate is clear (see handout of extracts from SC resolutions from Module 2).** Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, MONUSCO is authorized to use all necessary means to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. The challenge, in this scenario, is not about the authority to use force to protect civilians and its own formations against attack, but rather, how to minimize the impact of the use of force on children associated with ADF
 - f) **The legal basis for the use of force is specified in the rules of engagement of Mission Y:**
 - (1) **Mission Y rules of engagement (Annex A, Rule 1.7):** “...protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, under imminent threat of physical violence...”
 - (2) **Rule 4.1: “Detain, Search and Disarm”**
 - (3) **Annex B, paragraph 7: Definition of hostile intent.** The provisions therein authorize the use of force, if needed, to detain and disarm
 - g) **MONUSCO Force Commander’s Directive – Protection of Children by MONUSCO Force (para. 4):** “All Force members must be aware of the grave violations against children in armed conflict in order to prevent them from happening and protect those who are most vulnerable. Each member of the military component must understand the problems faced by children, and look for warning signs related to the six grave violations.”

- 2) Strikes (indirect fire) against the ADF are already taking place. What actions could the mission and the Force take to reduce their impact on women and children in ADF camps?
 - a) *Continue to build the situational awareness picture on the locations being targeted and the persons present in those locations. Use JMAC, DDR, CAS and other mission assets, and also liaise with child protection actors outside the mission*



- b) *Dialogue must be maintained with the ADF throughout the offensive to persuade them to release women and children or, at least, to move them to a separate area. Strikes by UN Forces should be followed by negotiations (dialogue) with the threat of (further) strikes if no suitable agreement is reached. The mission must then be ready to receive women and children at short notice*
 - c) *UN Radio can warn the local community about ADF and UN operations*
 - d) *Control measures regarding fires may use “No Fire Areas” to protect local villages*
 - e) *Inform child protection actors outside the mission of the UN plan, and identify where they may be able to assist*
- 3) UN ground operations will start shortly. How can the impact on women and children in ADF camps be reduced during this phase?
- a) *Women and children will be in the logistics camps, but some will also be in the fighter camps and may be directly engaged in combat. With regard to the fighter camps, UN troops must first win the firefight before looking at special measures for women and children*
 - b) *Try to isolate the logistics camps from other ADF locations, so as to prevent ADF fighters from falling back into the logistics camps and other locations so as not to make them strike targets. The logistics camps can then be dealt with slowly using non-lethal means*
- 4) How can the impact on women and children in surrounding villages be reduced?
- a) *Ensure that locations are accurately plotted and are initially designated as “No Fire Areas” for UN indirect fire assets*
 - b) *Villagers may either stay in their villages and adopt village defence plans (e.g., go to a hideout in the bush where there is food and water) or leave the immediate area*
 - c) *The mission could set up a Community Alert Network (CAN) to keep the villages informed of the security situation so as to better enable them to take decisions; UN Radio may also play a role in disseminating information*
 - d) *The missions could designate and protect routes out of the area so as to facilitate movement. Patrols, the CAN and other actors should use these routes to gain access to the village. The routes and the destinations should be coordinated with designated humanitarian agencies and child/civilian protection actors who take care of women and children, until they can be united with their families and communities*
- 5) As a result of the operation, the Force is likely to have to take charge of a significant number of children associated with the ADF – at least for an initial period of time. What actions should be taken in that regard?
- a) *Keep the Senior Child Protection Adviser and Detention Focal Point informed*
 - b) *Separate children from the armed group as soon as possible, secure, search, disarm, provide medical support and food; prepare to evacuate them*
 - c) *The 2020 DPO-DPPA-DFS Standard Operating Procedures on the Handling of Detention in UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions, including its annex B on special considerations for children, should serve as reference*



Discussion following presentations on the actions carried out by Force HQ:

- A. Situational awareness picture integrated with knowledge of Child Protection Section/Unit and Human Rights Division, and NGOs. This was achieved through the Emergency Protection of Civilians Working Group chaired by the Deputy SRSG-Political supported by the mission’s civilian Senior Protection of Civilians Adviser. All military-developed products were checked to ensure compliance with the Oslo Guidelines (which govern the use of foreign military and civil defence assets in disaster relief) prior to onward dissemination. This integrated approach produced an accurate picture of ADF tactics, techniques and practices, identifying likely “Targeted Areas of Interest” and possible “No Fires Areas.” This also allowed for more effective use of situational awareness, surveillance and reconnaissance assets. A team of 4-5 female uniformed personnel (Engagement Teams/Platoons (ET/EP)) were deployed to establish the state of children associated with the ADF, through engagement with the local population.
- B. Four Special Forces (SF) were detailed with UAVs to provide surveillance coverage of targets to positively identify children and vulnerable personnel on target prior to ground assaults. The STRIKE companies were resourced with female uniformed personnel (Engagement Teams/Platoons) on standby to engage with women and children after the strikes.
- C. An integrated mission-Force Information Operation (IO) plan, including specific activities, was launched with a view to separating children and other captives from the main force element of ADF. This was layered as follows:
 - i. SHAPING Activities: Designed to prompt a main fighter’s attack to separate ADF “fighting echelon” from “command and support locations.” This allowed for fire (artillery and airstrike) to neutralize combatants, while minimizing child casualties
 - ii. DECISIVE and EXPLOITING Activities: A “message-strike-message” policy was authorized. Strikes against ADF positions would continue until children were surrendered/handed over to the DDR unit
 - iii. SUSTAINING Activities: All UN public radio messages (Radio OKAPI) emphasized that UN operations against ADF would be halted and negotiations started **only** when children were surrendered/handed over

Recommendations: It is very important to work in collaboration with mission civilian components and external partners. Discuss options for separating children and ADF fighters, including gender considerations for male and female combatants (men, women, boys and girls associated with the ADF). Assess how to protect children and, at the same time, enable kinetic strikes against the illegal armed group (IAG). The end state to be achieved is the disarmament of the illegal armed



group and the release of the children associated with it. Discussions should also address how to sustain this process into DDR programs and negotiations. Joint planning and coordination are critical factors.

This scenario focuses on children associated with an armed group; therefore, the military cannot plan in isolation and must engage in joint planning with the civilian components and keep the Child Protection Section/Unit up to date and/or back-briefed.

