

MODULE 3

LEARNER’S HANDOUT

Role of Military Child Protection Focal Points

Early Warning

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 identifying early warning indicators of the six grave violations against children
- 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

MISSION-SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES/GUIDELINES

For the purposes of this exercise, use the Sample Force Commander’s Directive on Child Protection, Mission Y Rules of Engagement, and other documents handed out during Module 2.

SETTING

In Country E, fighting between government forces and armed groups have been incessant for years. More than one hundred armed groups, including foreign armed groups, have been operating in different regions of the country with different political agendas, including control over areas rich in natural resources. The country faces a dire security situation, attacks against civilians and communities, including women and children, grave human rights violations, displacement and extreme poverty. Transnational organized crime, unregulated arms trade and illicit flows have fuelled and perpetuated the conflict. Armed groups are funded through illicit trafficking of natural resources and by foreign states. Lootable minerals and resources including coal, silver, gold, timber, and wild game have increased use of child labour. According to the



United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in the North-West Province of Country E alone, more than 30,000 children are used for hazardous labour in mines.

The current United Nations peace operation in Country E, UNSME, is a multidimensional peacekeeping operation with a robust mandate. Its strategic priorities include the protection of civilians, including women and children, the protection and promotion of human rights, assistance in disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration, and resettlement (DDRRR) and community violence reduction (CVR), and support to the stabilization of state institutions. The mission is required to enhance community engagement, strengthen its early warning mechanism and fully account for child protection and gender considerations as cross-cutting issues throughout its mandate.

UNSME comprises 13,000 military personnel, 660 military observers and staff officers, 600 individual police officers and 1,000 formed police units. The mission has a consolidated early warning and situational awareness system. Anticipating violations and security threats is of key importance. The mission continues to suffer greatest number of fatalities amongst peacekeeping personnel. As part of the phased drawdown of its operations, UNSME, in close coordination with the UN Country Team (UNCT) and other relevant stakeholders, is expected to address capabilities gaps, including of host Government security forces, putting State institutions in the conditions to firmly manage those areas of the country that have reached relative stability. Meanwhile, the mission is consolidating its presence in the country’s North-West sector and hotspots where active conflict persists - which are also the richest in natural resources.

Some critics consider that UNSME is not doing enough to protect civilians and respond to the concerns of ordinary people. Accountability of perpetrators remains weak. Misinformation on the ground is also a problem. The perceived “taking side” of the mission - supporting host Government armed forces to neutralize specific armed groups - has been used politically, including by countries backing armed groups and militias, eroding the mission’s credibility. Protests and incidents have fuelled in the country, putting United Nations personnel and premises at risk.

In this climate, a sub-regional force composed of troops from neighbouring countries started deploying at the request of Country E Government. Regional troops are mandated to fight anti-government armed groups and cooperate with UNSME.

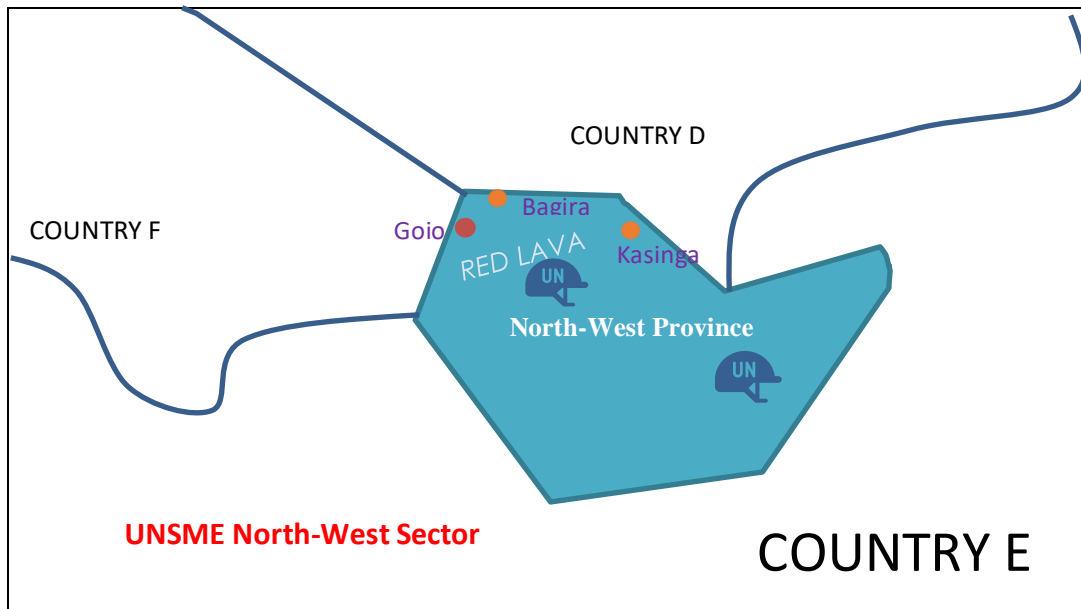
Last week, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and UNSME Head of Mission briefed the Mission’s Senior Management Team and members of the UNCT on the need to restore the legitimacy of the host Government authorities for natural resources management, boost state revenue to foster development, support host Government security forces to operate independently, strengthen early warning and capacity to anticipate threats, including through community engagement. The new SRSG strategic directions were sent to all uniformed and civilian components encouraging to boost coordination.



Country E ratified key international human rights and humanitarian instruments. The country is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. The country also endorsed the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and the Safe Schools Declaration.

SITUATION

Goio, Kasinga and Bagira are the main border towns in Country E’s North-West Province. They are located in the Red Lava region, which comprises the three-country point joining Country E, Country D and Country F. Red Lava is within the area of responsibility of the UNSME North-West Sector.



The area has enjoyed a period of relative stability following joint UNSME/Country E robust military operations and DDRRR interventions resulting in the repatriation of hundreds of foreign armed elements. The sudden reappearance of armed groups previously active in the region and cross-border movements has brought back a climate of insecurity.

The Red Lava region ranks among the lowest in the world on the human development index and recent armed violence has nullified any development attempt. Last year, Goio inhabitants discovered gold in the soil of a mountain located in the area, which turned out to be a mine rich in precious minerals. Since then, there is a continuous movement, including cross-border mobility, of local and foreign vehicles and people, including women and children, members of community armed groups, migrant workers, and unaccompanied minors from neighbouring countries, all attracted to participate in illegal mining activities.

While the Government of Country E has adopted ad hoc legislation and established an inter-ministerial committee which oversee an action plan for coordinating actions to put an end to the



presence of children in mining operations, child labour in mines remains a problem. Red Lava is no exception, and there is concern that more children will be recruited for hazardous labour. Host Government security forces and labour inspectors are not taking action, resulting in total impunity for child labour and other violations against children, which go unpunished.

Climate change is also a contributing factor to instability. Drought has brought local farmers and herders to their knees, causing displacement, disputes, and intercommunal clashes, including at transnational level, over grazing lands and access to water sources. Host Government forces have repeatedly accused communities in Red Lava of being affiliated to armed groups. Incursions by both host Government armed forces and police, including during nightly hours, to search for weapons and gold and to arrest armed combatants, including children, have been frequent.

The Community Liaison Assistant (CLA) based at the Force North-West Sector HQ received some calls from a local Community Alert Network (CAN) focal point who indicated that the women peace committee in Bagira is concerned that local members of armed groups are going from village to village together with some foreign men manipulating traditional leaders. They ordered community authorities to ‘provide’ boys and girls to help with mining activities and other tasks. In another alert, a missionary based in Goio said that teachers are receiving threats and stopped teaching. This is resulting in students aged 12 to 17 years old not going to school and hanging out in disreputable sites.

A Protection Working Group meeting was convened to discuss an operational response following the latest threats in the area, and a Joint Protection Team (JPT) – including child protection, civil affairs, human rights, protection of civilians (POC) and women protection staff – is ready to deploy to Bagira and Goio villages to assess protection needs.

National media outlets have already reported on the situation in Bagira and Goio, and UNSME is under criticism for failing to protect children in the area.

REQUIREMENTS

On the basis of each of the situations 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 Sector/Brigade Commander and to the Senior Child Protection Adviser.

EXERCISE 1

You are the Head of the G3 cell based at UNSME North-West Sector HQ. Following the CLA reports, you have been asked by the Sector/Brigade Commander to:



- 1) Recommend what are the possible actions that could be taken by UNSME military to mitigate threats to children in Bagira, Goio and Kasinga
- 2) Identify which mission components and external actors need to be involved in the operation or be informed about it
- 3) Provide advice on community engagement

EXERCISE 2

You are the military Child Protection Focal Point based at UNSME North-West Sector HQ. The Sector/Brigade Commander has requested a meeting to be briefed on the latest developments. Please prepare the key points of the briefing:

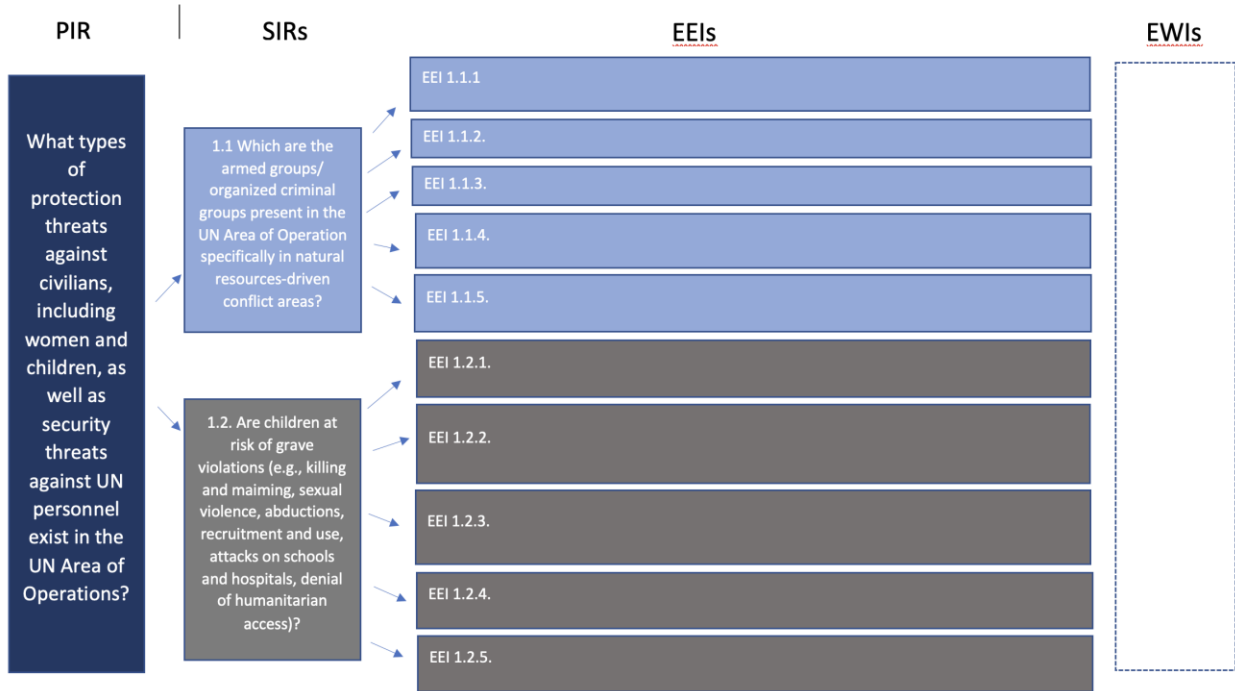
- 4) Based on the information received from the CLA, advise on the type of violations and abuses against children that may likely occur in the border towns area and its implications for UNSME military

EXERCISE 3

You are the Head of the G2 cell based at UNSME North-West Sector HQ. The Sector/Brigade Commander has requested your cell to update the Sector Information Acquisition Plan (IAP) to better reflect child protection and security concerns in areas where conflict is driven by natural resources. The Mission Peacekeeping-Intelligence Coordination Mechanism (MICM) has developed a broad Priority Information Requirement (PIR) “What types of protection threats against civilians, including women and children, as well as security threats against UN personnel exist in the UN Area of Operations?”

- 5) Break this PIR and Specific Intelligence Requirements (SIRs) into a series of smaller questions (Essential Elements of Information) (EEI) that reflect the unique child protection and operational concerns of the Battalion or Sector/Brigade Commander operating in Red Lava
- 6) Develop early warning indicators specific to grave violations against children for the proposed scenario to help military units acquiring information





CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE

The groups will have 120 minutes (2 hours) to discuss the situation(s), formulate recommendations and prepare the presentation/report. For question 5 and question 6, the groups may use the Information Acquisition Plan (IAP) template. Each group will have 10 minutes to present their solutions in plenary. The trainer (s) will review the written report and provide feedback to each group separately.

