



Module at a Glance

Overview

This module provides guidance for child protection staff on engaging with parties to conflict on child protection concerns, emphasizing the need to adjust approaches to each armed actor and context. If successful, this engagement can result in concrete outcomes, including the release and reintegration of children, the signing of action plans by parties to conflict and other commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children in the future. However, the stakes for such engagements can be high, highlighting the need for child protection staff to undertake thorough preparatory work.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Describe preparatory steps needed before engaging with parties to conflict
- Discuss key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict on action plans
- Discuss key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict on the release and reintegration of associated children

Module Outline

Duration: 120 minutes (2 hours)

The Module	
Intro slides	Slides 1-2
Preparatory steps needed before engaging with parties to conflict	Slides 3-7
Key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict on Action Plans	Slides 7-9
Key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict on the release and reintegration of associated children	Slides 10-12
Learning Activities	
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Learning Activity 4.2 Group discussion: Engaging on Action Plans	Page 11
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The Module



This module provides guidance for child protection staff on engaging with parties to conflict on child protection concerns. If successful, this engagement can result in concrete outcomes, including the release and reintegration of children, the signing of action plans by parties to conflict and other commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children. However, the stakes for such engagement are high, which is why we want to emphasize the need for thorough preparatory work.

Slide 1: Introduction to Module 4 - Engaging with parties to conflict



Module 4: ENGAGING WITH PARTIES TO CONFLICT



Slide 2: Learning objectives

Learning objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Describe preparatory steps needed before engaging with parties to conflict
- Discuss key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict, particularly on
 - Action plans
 - The release and reintegration of associated children



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- It is important to recognize at the outset that this module will only cover some aspects of what is a highly complex area. Engagement with parties to conflict requires highly specialized negotiation skills that go beyond the scope of this training.
- This module focuses on the key preparatory steps needed before engaging with parties to conflict on child protection concerns. We will also discuss some of the key considerations to bear in mind when engaging with parties to conflict, particularly when developing and implementing action plans and supporting the release and reintegration of associated children. At the end of this module, you will be able to:
 - Describe preparatory steps needed before engaging with parties to conflict
 - Discuss key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict, particularly on action plans and the release and reintegration of associated children



For additional resources on engagement with parties to conflict and related negotiation skills, see Handbook, section 6.7.

Learning Outcome 4.1

Preparatory steps needed before engaging with parties to conflict

Learning Activity 4.1

Group discussion: engaging with parties to conflict

Slide 3: Group discussion: engaging with parties to conflict

Group discussion: engaging with parties to conflict

- What has been your experience of engaging with parties to conflict?
- Are you engaging with listed parties *only* or also with non-listed parties?
- What are the mission’s objectives for engagement?
- Do other mission components engage with parties to conflict?



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Learners will have an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences of engaging with parties to conflict and learn from others.

TIME: 20 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Discuss the questions on the slide (above). Remind learners that many of these questions will be discussed in more detail later on in this module. You can also expand the discussion to include engaging with parties to conflict on other types of commitments beyond action plans, such as official command orders.

- Some key points to highlight in the discussion are:
 - Engaging with non-listed parties to conflict can be a preventative action.
 - Consider the mission's objectives for engagement and make sure that the child protection team's efforts are aligned with these.
 - It is important to be aware of the engagement efforts of other mission components.



Before moving to the next slide, discuss some of the challenges of engaging with parties to conflict. Ask learners: What aspects of engaging with parties to conflict do you find particularly challenging in your mission context?

Slide 4: Challenges of engaging with parties to conflict

Challenges of engaging with parties to conflict

- Access constraints
- Designation of party as a 'terrorist entity'
- Fragmentation in party's chain of command
- Party refusing to engage on children
- Lack of coordination on release and reintegration of associated children



- There are numerous challenges when engaging with parties to conflict. These may include:
 - Access challenges, e.g., when child protection staff are not able to meet with non-State armed groups due to security constraints or government restrictions.
 - Designation of a party to conflict as a 'terrorist entity', which may pose legal and other challenges.

- Fragmentation in a party's chain of command and splintering of factions, which makes it more difficult to identify which commander(s) and at what levels to engage.
- Party refusing to engage on children, e.g., for fear of facing legal repercussions for having committed violations of international law.
- Lack of coordination on the release and reintegration of children, in particular coordination between actors negotiating the release of children and those in charge of providing reintegration services. Inadequate or delayed reintegration programming can impede dialogue with parties to conflict.



Ask learners: What can you do to address anticipated challenges and mitigate anticipated risks? (For suggested actions to address these challenges, see the Handbook, section 6.5, table 13).

Slide 5: Why do you need to prepare?

Why do you need to prepare?

- To focus on the right interlocutor(s)
- To adapt messages and approaches
- To comply with mission policies and practices
- To learn from the experience of and coordinate approaches with the mission and partners



- Review the reasons for investing in preparations for engaging with parties to conflict listed on the slide (above).

Slide 6: Preparation matters!

Preparation matters!

Expected engagement	Unexpected engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDR process • Action plan • Peace process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed actor surrendering without warning • Large number of children seeking protection in UN compounds/bases • Government not able or willing to support DDR process

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- There are two types of scenarios for engagement with parties to conflict:
 - Expected interactions where staff foresee and plan opportunities for engagement with parties to conflict on child protection concerns, such as DDR processes, negotiations on action plans and involvement in peace processes.
 - Unexpected interactions where staff need to engage with parties to conflict unexpectedly and without warning. For example, children may suddenly seek protection in UN compounds or bases after having left armed forces or groups.



Ask learners: Do you think that preparation matters less/more if the engagement is unexpected (i.e., staff need to engage with parties to conflict unexpectedly and without warning)?

- In both instances, adequate planning and preparation, including contingency planning, are essential. For example, it is always useful to know the structure and motivations of the concerned party in advance.

- Let us take a closer look at some of the aspects to consider before engaging with parties to conflict.

Slide 7: Key considerations for engagement

Key considerations for engagement

- Attitudes/practices of mission leadership
- Rules and regulations on engagement
- Previous experiences with party to conflict
- Applicable legal framework
- Party to conflict’s internal structure
- Party to conflict’s motivations and interests



- You can use these key considerations to analyse different parties to conflict in your mission context and inform your engagement strategy.



Go over the key considerations listed on this slide and discuss with learners why it is important to analyse each of these aspects. For example, why is it important for them to know the party's internal structure or the mission leadership's attitudes and practices towards engagement with the concerned party? What other aspects should they consider when engaging with a party to conflict?

Table 11 of the Handbook (section 6.2) lists additional aspects to consider before engaging with parties to conflict and explains the rationale for doing so.

- Now we will talk about two specific areas where child protection staff are most frequently engaging with parties to conflict:
 - Developing and implementing action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children, as mandated by the UN Security Council.

- Supporting the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups.
- For both of these areas, let us talk about your previous experiences and what additional aspects you should bear in mind moving forward.

Learning Outcome 4.2

Key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict on action plans

Learning Activity 4.2

Group discussion: engaging on action plans

Slide 8: Group discussion: engaging on action plans

Group discussion: engaging on action plans

- What has been your experience of engaging parties to conflict on action plans? What is working/not working?
- Why do parties to conflict agree to action plans? What aspects of action plans are worth emphasizing to them?



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Learners will reflect on their current approaches to engaging parties to conflict on action plans and look at options for improvement.

TIME: 20 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Discuss the questions on the slide. The focus of the discussion may depend on the status of action plans in the country where learners are deployed.
 - If the training takes place in a country where an action plan has been

signed or implemented, make sure to explicitly refer to this as part of the discussion.

- If efforts are under way to have an action plan signed, or if efforts to sign an action plan have not been successful, encourage learners to discuss why this might be the case.
- While facilitating this discussion, keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. It is important for learners to reflect on their practices and be more conscious of the motivations and interests of the party they are seeking to engage with, as well as of the relationships and dynamics within the mission regarding engagement with the party in question.
- You can also expand the discussion to include engaging with parties to conflict on other types of commitments beyond action plans, such as official command orders.

Slide 9: Key aspects for a successful action plan

Key aspects for a successful action plan

- ✓ Political interest of party
- ✓ Consistent advocacy
- ✓ Unconditional access
- ✓ Effective coordination
- ✓ Context-specific action plan
- ✓ Regular monitoring of implementation
- ✓ Resources for implementation



Here is an overview of some key requisites for successfully developing and implementing an action plan with a party to conflict:

- Political interest of the potential signatory party in the action plan
- Consistent and repeated advocacy of SRSG/Head of Mission, which may require

advocacy within the mission

- Unconditional access for the United Nations to barracks, military training centres or camps of the party to conflict in question
- Effective coordination, including
 - among CTFMR co-chairs
 - with party to conflict, e.g., through appointment of child protection focal points within the government or non-State armed group(s) to act as counterparts for the mission
- Context-specific action plan, alongside an implementation plan
- Regular monitoring of the implementation of the action plan by CTFMR
- Financial and other resources to support the signatory party in implementing the action plan



Ask learners if they agree/disagree with these points or would like to add other points to this list.

Learning Outcome 4.3

Key considerations when engaging with parties to conflict on the release and reintegration of associated children

Learning Activity 4.3

Group discussion: release and reintegration of associated children

Slide 10: Group discussion: release and reintegration of associated children

Group discussion: Release and reintegration of associated children

- What are some common mistakes in engaging with parties on DDR for children? How can you avoid making them?



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Learners will reflect on current approaches to engaging parties to conflict on the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups and look at options for improving engagement.

TIME: 20 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Discuss the question on the slide (above). If the training takes place in a country where there are formal or informal release and reintegration processes, make sure to explicitly refer to this as part of the discussion.

- Share the handout (see below) with learners. Go over 'dos and don'ts' and explain points that have not come up in the previous discussion. You may also want to share some examples with learners of your own experiences engaging with armed forces/groups on the release and reintegration of children – discussing what has worked or not worked and why.
- Handout: Dos and don'ts for supporting the release and reintegration of associated children

Learning Activity 4.4

Group exercise: preparing for engagement

Slide 11: Group exercise: preparing for engagement

Group exercise: preparing for engagement

Tasks:

- 1) Identify a current child protection issue in your mission area that requires engagement with a party to conflict
- 2) Discuss the following questions:
 - a) Are you engaging with the right person(s)?
 - b) What is the party's interest in engagement?
 - c) What are the mission's attitudes towards this party?
 - d) What approach would be best suited for this engagement?



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Learners will prepare a strategy for engagement with parties to conflict on a specific child protection issue relevant to their mission.

TIME: 40 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Divide learners into groups of 4-5 people.
- Share the handout with them, go over the tasks listed on the slide/handout, and give them 30 minutes to work on the tasks.
 - Handout: Preparing for engagement
- During the debrief, ask learners to share what they have learned from doing this exercise about engaging with armed forces/groups.



This group activity is a good opportunity for learners to apply some of the lessons from their actual work in this area. Encourage learners to challenge their usual ways of engaging with parties to conflict in the mission and think 'outside the box'.

Slide 12: Takeaways

Takeaways

- Take advantage of your mandate and political space to engage with parties to conflict
- It's important to have a good understanding of relevant parties to conflict in your mission area and the best person(s) within the party to talk to
- Avoid “one-size-fits-all” approaches
- Be aware of the links between your engagement with a party to conflict and the mission’s engagement



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Reiterate to learners that this session focuses only on a few key elements of engaging with parties to conflict and point them to other relevant resources on the issue, including those listed in the Handbook (section 6.7).

Learning Activities

Additional information for each learning activity is in a separate file. It includes:

Number	Name	Methods
Learning Activity 4.3	Dos and don'ts for supporting the release and reintegration of associated children	Handout
Learning Activity 4.4	Preparing for engagement	Handout