

Lesson 2.6



Child Protection

Aim, Relevance and Learning Outcomes

Aim

To explain the duties of peacekeeping personnel in child protection as part of the core mandate of a UN peacekeeping operation.

Relevance

As peacekeeping personnel, the UN expects you to protect and promote human rights, including children's rights. As a UN peacekeeper, you hold the power to protect children from violations of their rights, as part of the peacekeeping duty to protect. Children are vulnerable and enjoy special protections under international law.

You must understand your role in protecting children from the six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. This includes protection from violence such as recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups.

This lesson explains your responsibilities to protect children and promote their rights. You must be familiar with the special vulnerabilities of girls and boys.

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2.6 Child Protection 

Aim

- To explain the duties of peacekeeping personnel in child protection as part of the core mandate of a UN peacekeeping operation

Relevance

- As peacekeeping personnel, the UN expects you to protect and promote human rights, including children's rights. You have a duty to protect.
- You must understand the role in protecting children from the six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

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Learning Outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- Define a child according to international law.
- Explain why children need special protection, especially during armed conflict.
- Identify the six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.
- List actions UN peacekeeping personnel can take to protect children.

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Learning Outcomes

1. Define a child according to international law.
2. Explain why children need special protection, especially during armed conflict.
3. Identify the six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.
4. List actions UN peacekeeping personnel can take to protect children.

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Lesson at a Glance



Minimum lesson duration: 45 minutes (including Learning Activity 2.6.1).

| The Lesson | Pages | Slides |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| Required Learning Activity 2.6.1: Film: <i>A Child's Fate – Child Protection and Peacekeeping</i> | 4–5 | 3-4 |
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| Importance of Attention to Children and Armed Conflict | 8–17 | 7–8 |
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| Optional Learning Activities | |
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| Optional Learning Activity 2.6.2: Risks to Children during Armed Conflict | <i>See 2.6 Learning Support</i> |
| Optional Learning Activity 2.6.3: Obligations when Interacting with Children | |



Trainer Tips: See 2.6 Learning Support for tips on starting the lesson, required learning activity instructions, optional learning activities and learning evaluation.

The Lesson

Required Learning Activity 2.6.1

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Required Learning Activity 2.6.1: A Child's Fate – Child Protection and Peacekeeping

Purpose: To consider the impact of conflict on children and the importance of their special protection

Time: 15 minutes

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Required Learning Activity 2.6.1: A Child's Fate – Child Protection and Peacekeeping

| | |
|---|--|
| Method | UN Video (Slide 4), reflection and group discussion |
| Purpose | To consider the impact of conflict on children and the importance of their special protection, as a bridge into Lesson 2.6 |
| Time | 15 minutes |
| See 2.6 <i>Learning Support</i> for instructions. | |



Trainer Tips: *The UN peacekeeping web page that contains the film A Child's Fate - Child Protection and Peacekeeping describes child protection as being "at the heart of peacekeeping".*

The reasons for this include that children's experiences in violent conflict touch the hearts of adults because they are so vulnerable, and breaking cycles of recurring conflict require that children be protected from experiencing violent conflict and its lasting effects.

The film refers to child protection advisers routinely being deployed to conflict zones by UN Security Council mandate since 1999.



Update participants with this current information: Child Protection staff include national and international child protection advisers, officers, assistants and UN volunteers.

Some missions have child protection sections, others have child protection units. Child protection staff are present in peacekeeping operations with a child protection mandate.

The child protection component (unit or section) and staff are key experts on this mandated task in a UN peacekeeping mission, supporting all peacekeepers in their shared responsibility for child protection in each mission context. Reinforce this shared responsibility as part of closing Learning Activity 2.6.1 and throughout the lesson, as explained further in Lesson 2.6 Learning Support.

Definitions

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2.6 Child Protection 

Definitions

Who is considered a Child?

UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) states that a child:

- *"means every human being below the age of 18 years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".*

(CRC, Art. 1)

The UN standard defines a child as below 18 years

- This definition guides actions of all UN peacekeeping personnel

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Key Message 1: International law considers individuals under 18 years to be children, unless their country considers them adults at an earlier age. For the UN, all those under 18 are children, regardless of national law. All children have special protections and care under international law.

Who Do You Consider a Child?

In some cultures, children enter adulthood once they marry, become partners or earn their own income, so they could be considered adults when younger than 18. Their social role defines maturity, not age. However, peacekeeping personnel must follow the UN standard of 18 years.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is one of the international treaties that expand on and detail specific human rights introduced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and key covenants. The CRC states that a child “means every human being below the age of 18 years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (CRC, Art. 1).

The age of majority is the age that the law of a State recognizes a person as an adult. In many countries and for the UN, a child is every person under 18 years. This means every person from birth until their 18th birthday.

What is Child Protection?

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2.6 Child Protection 

What is Child Protection?

- **The aim of child protection is to:**
 - Protect children from violence, abuse and neglect
 - Promote their rights
- The Security Council determined child protection to be a primary international peace and security concern in 1999
- The Secretary-General reports annually to the Security Council on global trends and country-specific situations of children and armed conflict

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The aim of child protection is to:

- Protect children from violence, abuse and neglect
- Promote their rights.

The UN Security Council determined child protection to be a primary international peace and security concern in 1999. The Secretary-General reports annually to the Security Council on global trends and country-specific situations of children and armed conflict.



Trainer Tips: Country-specific reports are also available on the website of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC), for example, on the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan. When the location of learners' deployment is known, concentrate lesson coverage on specifics from that country or region. Invite learners to estimate the number of children, 18 years and younger, against whom grave violations in situations of armed conflict have been verified by the UN as occurring in the most recent year for which data is available. Use the link provided to Security Council reports to obtain current figures as the primary reference for this lesson. The figures given here are for 2023 and were reported in 2024, after verification.

Trends are not positive. The figures included in the 2024 report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict reported 30,705 violations against 22,557 children in 2023, a 21 per cent increase compared with 2022. The 2024 figures, which will be published in 2025, are expected to be higher still.

The available figures do not capture the full global picture. They represent known and verified blatant violations of international law and international treaties.

The violations in 2023 affected 15,847 boys, 6,252 girls and 458 other children of unknown sex.

- 5,301 killed.
- 6,348 maimed
- 8,655 recruited and used
- 4,356 abducted
- 5,205 incidents of denial of humanitarian access.
- In addition, 2,491 children were detained for actual or alleged associations with armed groups, including those designated as terrorist organizations by the UN, or for national security reasons.



Trainer Tips: Consider focusing the lesson coverage specifically on the issues that learners will likely be confronted with once deployed. Use figures from the country to which they will be deployed if that is known. When not, focus on:

- **The situation in countries where the UN has peacekeeping operations**, e.g.: in 2022 the highest number of violations was verified in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- **Key trends in UN peacekeeping**: e.g.: In 2023, the number of instances of killing and maiming increased by 35 per cent compared with the year before.



Key Message 2: The need for UN peacekeepers to fully take up their responsibilities for child protection **has never been greater.**

- As armed violence and conflict have become steadily more multidimensional, complex and chronic, violations against children have continued to rise.
- Children are negatively affected by new threats including fighting spreading into new areas, splintering of armed groups, intercommunal violence, an upsurge in the activity of armed groups and increasing threats of injury or death from explosive ordnance.

Importance of Attention to Children and Armed Conflict

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2.6 Child Protection 

Importance of Attention to Children and Armed Conflict

- Children can be more easily influenced than adults
- Children depend on family, community and government structures for protection and care
- The violence in armed conflict poses risks to the healthy development of children



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Key Message 3: Armed conflict disproportionately affects children. The needs of girls and boys may differ based on their gender roles during and after conflict.

Why are children most vulnerable during armed conflict?



Trainer Tips: Encourage learners to refer back to points from the film and discussion in Learning Activity 2.6.1 and add to the three points provided below.

Some reasons children are particularly vulnerable during armed conflict are as follows:

1. Children can be more easily influenced and used than adults. They have less power than adults and can be made to do things. They may not fully understand the consequences of their actions. For example, an armed force or group may lure them to join with promises of employment or protection.
2. Children depend on family, community and government structures for protection and care. Conflict destroys these structures. Displaced and unaccompanied children are at greater risk of exploitation or abuse.
3. Children are still growing up. The violence of armed conflict poses risks to their healthy development. For example, the denial of access to basic rights and services, including to adequate food, has a more serious long-term effect on children than on adults. Babies and younger children are especially vulnerable. Traumatic experiences during this time or other negative influences on their development, such as indoctrination, carry more lasting consequences for children than for adults.

Examples of differences between experiences of girls and boys affected by armed conflict:

- All children face increased risk during armed conflict
- The needs of girls and boys may differ based on their gender roles during and after conflict
- Peacekeeping personnel – especially those involved in planning, operations, protection and any work with exposure to children – need to consider these differences.



Example

South Sudan

In refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) settings throughout the world, women and girls are more vulnerable to sexual violence (e.g. women and girls may be more vulnerable to sexual violence when leaving camps in search of firewood for cooking). For example, in South Sudan, women and girls often walk several kilometres away from camps to find a few branches to burn. This turns them into prime targets for



militia groups, national military or police forces and other men who act in a climate of impunity.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, boys are vulnerable to recruitment activities by armed groups controlling access to farming fields. For example, an 8-year-old boy from North Kivu Province testified the following: "I was visiting my uncle and in his field I ran into men from an armed group. They really intimidated me and made me go with them, carrying a goat they had stolen. Now I know why they took me: Their *fétisheur* was looking for an assistant, a boy who had not yet slept with a girl. From then on, there was not a minute that I was very far from the *fétisheur*." (A *fétisheur* is challenging to accurately translate into English. Synonyms include magician, shaman, occultist or witch doctor: a person who uses occult powers to predict future events and make curses, a fetishist.) In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on average, 65% of the boys recruited by armed groups do not have combat roles.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, most victims of mines and other explosive remnants of war are boys aged 8 to 15. Boys often assume roles in Afghan society that take them outside the house, for example, herding cattle. Boys tend to be targeted for alleged association with armed forces and groups more than girls. This puts boys at greater risk of physical attack, detention and torture.



Trainer Tips: *The UN mission in Afghanistan, UNAMA, which does not fall under the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), has a child protection mandate. The example from Afghanistan effectively illustrates gender-specific threats.*

Low-level, intra-State conflicts have replaced major inter-State wars. These conflicts are less visible, with less humanitarian access. Such conflicts are not removed from children's lives but are often happening in their communities and affecting their homes. Lines between civilians and combatants are blurring.

Today's wars increasingly target children, women and other civilians. Schools and hospitals – which are particularly life-sustaining and life-saving for children – are increasingly targeted.

This new reality confirms why children in conflict need protection more now than ever before.

Six Grave Violations Against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict

The six grave violations identified and condemned by the UN Security Council are elaborated through various resolutions. See the list of resolutions on pages 22-23.

On the basis of information verified through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children (MRM), the Secretary-General in the annex to his or her annual report on children and armed conflict, lists parties to conflict who kill, maim, recruit and use children, commit rape and sexual violence against them, abduct them or attack schools and hospitals.



Key Message 4: “War violates every right to a child”, Graça Machel concluded to the Secretary-General, following the 1996 landmark study, *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. These six grave violations occur often in situations of armed conflict:

1. Recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups
2. Killing and maiming
3. Rape and other forms of sexual violence
4. Attacks against schools and hospitals
5. Abduction
6. Denial of humanitarian access.



Trainer Tips: Project Slide 8 with images of the six grave violations as you cover the definitions.

Slide 8



2.6 Child Protection 

**Six Grave Violations against Children
on Situations of Armed Conflict**

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN |  KILLING AND MAIMING OF CHILDREN |  SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN |
|  ATTACKS AGAINST SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS |  ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN |  DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS |

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Examples – Grave Violations against Children

The UN documents grave violations committed against children in situations of conflict. The annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (2023) reported the scale of the issue within one year, from January to December 2022. The figures may be higher, as many cases are not reported (for example, because of lack of access and fears of survivors and witnesses).

Country examples:

- **Central African Republic:** 414 grave violations against 230 children (123 boys, 106 girls, 1 sex unknown), including 104 children who were victims of multiple violations.
- **The Democratic Republic of the Congo:** 3,764 grave violations against 2,838 children (1,973 boys, 865 girls). A total of 1,027 children were victims of multiple violations.
- **Israel:** 8,009 grave violations against 4,360 children (3,139 boys, 1,221 girls; Israeli children (113), Palestinian children (4,247)) in Israel (120); the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (4,868); and in the Gaza Strip (3,021). Furthermore, over 23,000 grave violations against children (3,900 Israeli children, 19,887 Palestinian children) by all parties to the conflict were reported and were pending verification.
- **Mali:** 1,141 grave violations against 1,024 children (879 boys, 143 girls, 2 sex unknown), including 31 children who were victims of multiple violations.
- **Myanmar:** 2,799 grave violations against 2,093 children (1,694 boys, 385 girls, 14 sex unknown), including 134 children who were affected by multiple violations.
- **Somalia:** 2,283 grave violations against 1,802 children (1,349 boys, 453 girls), including 401 children who were victims of multiple violations.
- **Syrian Arab Republic:** 1,574 grave violations against 1,549 children (1,385 boys, 118 girls, 46 sex unknown), including 4 girls who were victims of multiple violations.



Trainer Tips: Before you move on with the lesson, introduce the term **grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict**. Explain that the Security Council specifically recognizes six grave violations that form a threat to peace and security worldwide.

UN peacekeeping personnel need to identify and report on the six grave violations against children. Information on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism is available later in this lesson. Based on what they have heard so far, can participants name the six grave violations

against children? Note points made on a flipchart sheet. Use one colour of pen for the six grave violations, another colour of pen for other violations mentioned. Prompt with questions, including questions linked to information in the film shown in Learning Activity 2.6.1, A Child's Fate – Child Protection and Peacekeeping. As you present each grave violation, ask the group what human right is violated in each case, to strengthen the understanding of applied human rights.

With limited time to cover Lesson 2.6, you may need to move relatively quickly through the definitions. Do not skip the definitions entirely, as they provide depth and meaning to the identification of the six grave violations.

Definitions of the Six Grave Violations

The definitions below are from the *UN Field Manual for Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict* (OSRSG-CAAC/UNICEF/DPKO, June 2014) and updated definitions such as those found in the *Guidance Note on Abduction*, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2022.

Knowing the definitions of each grave violation helps UN peacekeeping personnel identify and report violations. Different sources may use different definitions. Trainers are encouraged to consistently use the definitions and terminology in the lesson which are harmonized with language from the UN Field Manual.

Killing and maiming are acts that result in the death of or serious permanent injury to a child or children, including scarring, disfigurement or mutilation.

The killing and maiming of children can result from direct targeting or from indirect actions. For example, from crossfire, landmines, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), military operations, armed group activities, house demolitions, search-and-arrest campaigns and suicide attacks. Torture is reported under this violation.

- Example: Darfur, Sudan – Children were killed and maimed in incidents involving explosive remnants of war, shooting, shelling and aerial bombings by different parties fighting each other, including Government forces.

Recruitment is defined as enlisting any person under the age of 18 years in any armed force or group – whether compulsory, forced or voluntary.

Use of children is when armed forces or groups make them work in any capacity, not only taking part in fighting directly. Examples include the use of boys and girls as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, sexual slaves, spies and collaborators.

UN policy does not use the term child soldier. Peacekeepers are requested to use the more accurate term children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG).

A child does not have to carry a weapon to be considered a child associated with an armed force or armed group.



References

- Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Field Support, Department of Political Affairs, *Policy on Child Protection in UN Peace Operations* (2017)
- Department of Peace Operations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, *Handbook for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations* (2023)
- Department of Peace Operations, *Specialised Training Materials for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations* (2023)
- Department of Peace Operations, *Reinforcement Training Packages on Child Protection for the UN Military* (2023)
- Department of Peace Operations, *Reinforcement Training Packages on Child Protection for the UN Police* (2023)



Trainer Tips: Both the Geneva Conventions and the CRC state that children under the age of 15 years shall not be recruited into armed forces or used in fighting. The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict is the treaty that aims to raise the age of compulsory recruitment and participation in fighting to 18 years. The legal framework for child protection is covered below, with more details on these aspects.



Example – Central African Republic

Armed groups recruited and used children to attack security forces and civilians, spy and scout, transport military supplies and equipment, collect taxes from the local community and cook.

Abduction is unlawfully taking a child temporarily or permanently for the purpose of any form of exploitation. Abducted children may be removed, seized, captured, apprehended, taken or forcibly disappeared.

Exploitive purpose refers to taking advantage of children’s lack of freedom, power, knowledge and status to force them to provide any work or services or inflict harm to children.

Exploitation includes:

- Recruitment and use in armed forces or groups – in combat or support roles
- Participation in fighting

- Sexual exploitation or abuse – rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy
- Forced labour or enslavement
- Hostage-taking – to obtain ransom, release of prisoners, surrender of a family member or other similar benefit
- Indoctrination
- Sale.



Example – Libya

Opposition forces abducted children from camps for IDPs. The children were interrogated in military bases.



Trainer Tips: Ask participants if they know what enforced disappearance is. Enforced disappearance or forced disappearance is when State officials (or those acting on their behalf) arrest, detain or abduct individuals and refuse to acknowledge their whereabouts. This definition is taken from the Declaration on the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance – proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in resolution 47/133 of 18 December 1992. The 2022 Guidance Note on Abduction uses the same definition for enforced disappearance.

Enforced disappearance is the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of removal of freedom by agents of the State or by persons acting with the authorization, support or consent of the State. This is followed by a refusal to acknowledge that this has happened or by keeping what has happened to the disappeared person and where they are a secret. This places such a person outside the protection of the law consistent with the definition in the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are violent acts of a sexual nature. This encompasses rape, other sexual violence, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced marriage, forced pregnancy or enforced sterilization.

Rape is an act of non-consensual sexual intercourse. This can include the invasion of any part of the body with a sexual organ and/or the invasion of the genital or anal opening with any object or body part. Any penetration is considered rape. Efforts to rape someone that do not result in penetration are considered attempted rape.

Sexual violence is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act or acts to traffic a person's sexuality. Sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, sexual slavery and/or trafficking, forced pregnancy, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or abuse and forced abortion.



Example - Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, parties to the conflict committed sexual violence against children. Many girls experienced rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage at the hands of their recruiters. For instance, a 13-year-old girl was repeatedly raped and forced to cook for a colonel serving a community self-defence group, and a 15-year-old girl was abducted and held in a shack to be raped by members of the armed group until she became pregnant.

The violation of attacks against schools and hospitals include all attacks on school and hospital facilities whether intentional or not. These buildings are civilian objects. It also includes attacks on school and medical personnel. In armed conflict, there are recurrent attacks or threats against:

- **Schools and hospitals** – including physical attacks, looting and destruction
- **Children attending school, teachers and medical personnel** – including killing, maiming, abduction and use of these protected people as human shields.

Other ways in which schools and hospitals are prevented from working include occupation, shelling, and targeting for propaganda by armed forces or groups. Attacks against schools, teachers, school staff and students going to and from school are also examples of how conflict deprives children of their right to education.



Example – Attacks against Schools and Hospitals in Mali

Schools and hospitals came under increasing attack in efforts to discredit the Government and instil fear in the population. Armed forces and armed groups used schools and hospitals as bases or storage areas. Teachers, nurses, doctors and related protected personnel were targeted, with the aim of making Government institutions less effective.

Denial of Humanitarian Access

Intentional denial or obstruction of humanitarian assistance to people in need by parties to an armed conflict - in particular, to children. The denial includes obstruction to humanitarian actors preventing access and help to children affected by armed conflict. This denial violates international humanitarian law (IHL) and the Geneva Conventions.



Example – Intentional Denial or Obstruction in Somalia

An armed group in Somalia issued an access ban against humanitarian organizations, affecting over 3.5 million people, half of them children, resulting in food shortages.

UN Partners that Lead on Addressing Children and Armed Conflict

UN Partners Leading on Children and Armed Conflict

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2.6 Child Protection 

UN Partners Leading in CAAC

UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC)

 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for
CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)

 <https://www.unicef.org/>

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Key Message 5: Two organizations **lead** global efforts to address Children and Armed Conflict - **OSRSG-CAAC and UNICEF.**

- The UN created the **Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict** (OSRSG-CAAC) in 1996, with a specific mandate to protect children from the impact of armed conflict.
- The **United Nations Children's Fund** (UNICEF) is the leading humanitarian and development agency working globally for the rights of every child.

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC):

- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC) is the leading UN advocate for the protection and well-being of children affected by armed conflict globally.
- The General Assembly created this mandate (resolution A/RES/51/77).
- The SRSG-CAAC:
 - Strengthens protection of children affected by armed conflict
 - Raises awareness
 - Promotes collection of information about the challenges of children affected by armed conflict
 - Fosters international cooperation to improve the protection of children
 - Reports yearly to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.
- The SRSG-CAAC raises awareness among political bodies, for example, the Security Council and relevant governments of Member States. The purpose is to:
 - Maintain a sense of urgency among decision makers
 - Engage political and diplomatic support.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF):

- Works for the rights, survival, development and protection of children. This includes all ages, from prenatal to adolescence
- Activities include provision of safe shelter, nutrition, protection from disaster and conflict, prenatal care for healthy births, clean water and sanitation, health care and education
- Improves lives of children and families through its global presence in different countries
- Lobbies and partners with leaders, thinkers and policymakers to advance children’s access to their rights, especially for the most disadvantaged.

Legal Framework, Policy and Guidance

The world community has steadily strengthened the legal framework for protecting children during conflict. Peacekeeping personnel needs to be aware of important international treaties and relevant resolutions, commitments, guidelines and principles.



Key Message 6: The legal framework obligates UN peacekeeping operations to protect children in armed conflict. International human rights and humanitarian law give children special protection and care.

Legal Framework – International Law

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2.6 Child Protection 

Legal Framework – International Law

Geneva Conventions (1949)

- Protects children as civilians
- Gives children special protection

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)

- Covers all basic rights of children, including the rights to education, health, survival and participation

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC, 1998)

- Makes recruitment and involvement of children under 15 years in hostilities a war crime

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International Humanitarian Law, including the Geneva Conventions (1949) and its Additional Protocols (1977)

- Protects children as civilians in international and intra-State armed conflict
- Also gives children special protection and care due to their age.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)

- Covers all basic rights of children, including rights to education, health, survival and participation
- Member States that have signed the CRC are to undertake the necessary actions and policies to further children’s best interests

- This is the most ratified human rights treaty as it has been signed by 196 countries. As of December 2024, only one UN Member State had not ratified it – the United States of America.

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC, 1998):

- Makes the recruitment and involvement of children under 15 years in fighting a war crime.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182 (1999)

- Calls for “immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency”
- Considers forced or compulsory recruitment for use in fighting as one of the worst forms of child labour.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2000)

- A key turning point in addressing the involvement of children in armed conflict
- Strengthens protection of children during armed conflicts
- Focuses on the recruitment and use of children in fighting
- Increases the age limits for direct involvement in fighting to a minimum of 18 years.

The Mine Ban Treaty (1997) and Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008)

- Ban the use of these weapons
- Countries that sign must teach communities about the risk of these weapons and offer assistance for survivors.

Some national laws and traditional customs of host States may not reflect international law. They may even contradict it, as in the following three examples.

- **Female genital mutilation (FGM):** Although illegal under international law, FGM/C is prevalent in some parts of the world.
- **Rape.** National laws may not consider rape a crime, particularly rape within marriage.
- **Child and forced marriage.** National laws may set the legal age for marriage below international norms.

In such cases, international laws and standards supersede national laws.



Trainer Tips: For more information on the special protection measures required under international humanitarian law (IHL), see Article 77 of the first Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions and Article 4 of the second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions.

Legal Framework – Thematic Children and Armed Conflict Resolutions

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2.6 Child Protection 

CAAC and UN Peacekeeping Operations Mandates

- The Secretary-General lists parties to conflict perpetrating grave violations in annual report.
- Responses may be sanctions or other measures.
- Thematic CAAC Resolutions:
 - GA 51/77 (1996) – Establishment of mandate for Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict
 - SCR 1261 (1999) – Start of Children and Armed Conflict Agenda
 - SCR 1612 (2005) - Establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children

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Key Message 7: The UN upholds international human rights and humanitarian law. With respect to children and armed conflict, it has reinforced international law through a steadily stronger set of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and measures as well as in its policies, guidance and practices on child protection.

UN General Assembly Resolution 51/77 – Establishing mandate for the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (December 1996)

- This was a response to Graça Machel report *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, released in 1996
- Key recommendations were for the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on the impact of armed conflict on children, and to regularly report on the subject to the Security Council.

Children and Armed Conflict Agenda

In 1999, the Security Council formally acknowledged the protection of children in armed conflict as an international peace and security concern when it passed Security Council resolution (SCR) 1261. This marked the beginning of the Security Council children and armed conflict agenda.

The Security Council has re-confirmed its commitment to children in war zones through later resolutions, as shown in the table below.

The defining resolutions in the children and armed conflict agenda are shown on the slide, with the 2005 Security Council resolution establishing the MRM on grave violations against children in armed conflict following the table.



Trainer Tips: *The information on Security Council resolutions is mainly provided as background for trainers delivering this content. You may be asked specific questions about UN provisions on child protection and their development over time. Learners are not expected to learn or know the names or specifics of the Security Council Resolutions.*

Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict include:

- Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) formally acknowledged that the protection of children in armed conflict is a fundamental peace and security concern.
- Security Council resolution 1314 (2000) urged Member States to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
- Security Council resolution 1379 (2001) requested the Secretary-General to attach to his or her report a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children.
- Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) requested an action plan for a systemic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting system.
- Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) set up the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, highlighting the link between illicit trafficking in small arms and use of children in armed groups or forces.
- Security Council resolution 1882 (2008), expanded the criteria for the Secretary-Generals "list of shame" in his or her reports on children and armed conflict beyond recruitment to include killing, maiming, rape and other sexual violence against children.
- Security Council resolution 1998 (2011) expanded the criteria for listing parties to conflict in the Secretary-Generals report on children and armed conflict to include parties that attack or threaten schools or hospitals.

- Security Council resolution 2068 (2011) expressed deep concern about perpetrators who continue to commit violations against children, repeating the readiness to adopt targeted and gradual measures against them. It called on the Working Group to consider a broad range of options for increasing pressure on repeat offenders.
- Security Council resolution 2143 (2014) urged parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian character of schools, protect them from attack and use, mainstream of child protection in security sector reform, deliver child protection training for peacekeepers and incorporate related provisions in peace agreements.
- Security Council resolution 2225 (2015) added abductions as an additional violation to trigger inclusion of a part in the annexes of the Secretary-Generals annual report.
- Security Council resolution 2427 (2018) provided a framework for mainstreaming protection, rights, well-being and empowerment of children throughout the conflict cycle and sustaining peace efforts.
- Security Council resolution 2601 (2021), condemned attacks and threats of attack against schools, educational facilities and civilians connected with schools. It emphasized the need to make sure education can continue even in situations of armed conflict.

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) established the MRM on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

The MRM is a global system to monitor, document and report grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. The goal is to end such violations and hold perpetrators accountable. The MRM focuses on the six grave violations against children introduced above.

On the basis of UN verified information, the Secretary-General lists parties to conflict perpetrating such violations in his or her annual report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict.

Responses may be sanctions or other measures. The MRM relies on the listing of parties to the conflict to compel engagement with the UN through the development of action plans and other forms of commitments to end and prevent violations against children.



Trainer Tips: *The Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) (covered in Lesson 2.5) and the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) are similar. Stress that the MARA and the MRM are mechanisms to report abuses and violations of the rights of children and women. Continue to reinforce key messages about the purpose and goals of these two reporting systems: to prevent violations, to hold perpetrators accountable and to ensure victims receive the support*



they need. Mention that, while UN missions make significant contributions to the collection and verification of information on violations, not all UN peacekeeping personnel are directly involved in MRM reporting. Child protection staff members play the lead role, in collaboration with other mission components.

The Security Council's children and armed conflict agenda makes the protection of children in armed conflict a high-level policy priority of UN peacekeeping operations.

Political Commitments Supporting the Legal Framework

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2.6 Child Protection 

CAAC and UN Peacekeeping Operations Mandates

- Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (2007)
- Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (2017)



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Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (2007)

A set of political commitments for measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflict, adopted in 2007 at the Free Children from War Conference (French Government and UNICEF). They have four main objectives:

- Preventing unlawful recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups
- Securing the release of children who are associated with armed forces or armed groups
- Supporting children's reintegration
- Supporting and provide promising practices to protect boys and girls from recruitment and use.

The Paris Principles and Commitments complement other key commitments to protect children in situations of armed conflict. **The Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (2017)** focus on child protection in UN peacekeeping operations, through all stages of a conflict cycle. The 17 principles provide guidance on prioritizing and operationalizing the prevention of recruitment and use of children and supporting their safe release and handover to child protection actors.



Trainer Tips: *The UN changed the organization and names of entities working on peace and security after the adoption of the 2017 Policy on Child Protection. While the official title of the policy on child protection is the same, learners should note that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is now the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Department of Field Support (DFS) is now the Department of Operational Support (DOS), and Department of Political Affairs (DPA) is now Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).*

Policy on Child Protection in UN Peace Operations

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2.6 Child Protection 

Policy on Child Protection in UN Peace Operations

Mainstreaming child protection in UN peace operations:

- Ensuring all peacekeeping personnel are trained on child protection
- Monitoring and reporting on grave violations committed against children
- Engaging with parties to the conflict through action plans to end and prevent grave violations
- Advocacy on child protection issues

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Key Message 8: Peacekeeping operations carry out their critical role on child protection within the framework of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict and mission-specific resolution. The 2017 Policy on Child Protection underlines the obligation of all UN peacekeeping operations personnel to uphold and respect children's rights and to support the implementation of the child protection mandate.

Some key elements from the policy:

- Child protection is a cross-cutting theme and a whole-of-mission approach is required in delivering the child protection mandate
- Effective and integrated implementation of the mandate relies on the core underlying principles of complementarity, coherence and coordination
- Protection of children in situations of armed conflict is an inherent priority within the broader obligations of the UN to protect civilians
- Protecting children affected by armed conflict is a collective responsibility that requires a collective response.

Mainstreaming is an approach for integrating the protection of children in armed conflict into all relevant aspects of UN peacekeeping operations, including strategies, policies, training and other activities. This approach allows the UN to use all mission staff and their different types of expertise, networks and capacities to ensure more comprehensive and better protection of children. Core actions include:

- **Training on child protection:** All peacekeeping personnel shall be trained on child protection. Child protection staff are deployed to help implement child protection provisions of mandates. Where deployed, child protection staff support continuous training and provide guidance on child protection.
- **Monitoring and reporting grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict:** Peacekeeping operations help collect and verify information on grave violations against children through child protection advisers (CPAs), working with other mission components, notably, human rights, UN Police and the UN military.
- **Engaging in dialogue with parties to conflict:** Under the overall responsibility of the SRSG / head of mission (HOM), peacekeeping operations personnel engage in dialogue with parties to the conflict, including negotiating, developing and implementing action plans to end and prevent violations by armed forces and armed groups.
- **Action plans:** The UN and parties listed as having committed grave violations against children in the Secretary-General's report agree and sign action plans. Each action plan is specific, with concrete, timebound steps that lead to compliance with international laws, de-listing and ultimately a more protected future for children.



Example – Action Plan Items

- Criminalize recruitment and use of children by armed forces.
- Issue a military order to end and prevent child recruitment and use.
- Investigate and prosecute those responsible for violations against children.



- Appoint child protection focal points in security forces.
- Allow child protection actors to access military camps and bases regularly and freely to verify that no children are working there.
- Facilitate the release for children associated with armed forces and armed groups.
- Strengthen birth registration systems and make ways of checking age part of the recruitment procedures.
- Implement national campaigns to raise awareness and to prevent the recruitment and use of children.

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2.6 Child Protection 

Policy on Child Protection in UN Peace Operations

Prohibition of any form of child labour:

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



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Key Message 9: As peacekeeping personnel, you need to be alert and able to identify violations against children. The UN Policy on Child Protection (2017) and the UN Handbook for Child Protection Staff (2023) provide guidance to missions in this area.

Prohibition of Any Form of Child Labour

The DPKO-DFS-DPA Policy on Child Protection in UN peace operations (2017) strictly prohibits the use of children by UN peacekeeping operations and their personnel for working or other services. The policy applies to:

- All components of UN peacekeeping operations – civilian, military and police – as well as contractors and their associates
- All children, i.e. all people under the age of 18 years, regardless of the minimum legal age for work under national law
- All types of work: washing cars, shining shoes, cooking, cleaning, services as a messenger, whether or not it is paid (in money, food or in other ways).



Trainer Tips: This position may seem harsh. Peacekeeping personnel may want to support local people in their livelihoods. Families are fractured, and children may be the only income source. **However, the policy is strong for a reason.**

Supporting any kind of child labour is an abuse and violation of child rights. Let learners know that they can consult child protection staff in the mission on issues relating to children. More details on the child protection component are given later in the lesson.

Child Protection in UN Peacekeeping

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All mission components share responsibility for child protection.

Watch Out for the Six Grave Violations Against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict

All peacekeeping personnel are responsible for fully understanding the violations on which the UN expects them to report on. **The main focus is on the six grave violations against children committed by all parties to the conflict (armed forces or groups).**

Mandates and resources are limited. While children suffer a range of violations in conflict zones, the Security Council selected these six to monitor and report because of (a) their gravity and (b) the UN's ability to monitor and report on them.

Keep in mind that these violations only refer to violations against children (any person below the age of 18 years) that are:

- Committed as a direct result of armed conflict
- Committed by a party to the conflict.

Be Alert for Other Violations

Peacekeeping personnel may also be alert to other violations in a mission area. Examples:

- **Arrest and detention of children:** The arrest and detention of children is a serious concern in conflict settings. Their detention may result from an alleged association with armed forces or groups. Children may be seen as enemies or deserters – rather than victims.
- **Forced displacement:** Forced displacement may be of concern when it relates to fear of child recruitment, sexual violence or any other grave violation.
- **Child trafficking:** Armed groups or criminals have also taken advantage of the desperate situation of children and insecure borders. Children are traded or trafficked for sexual exploitation or domestic labour.

Recording and Referral

Peacekeeping personnel report basic information on incidents involving children to the child protection, human rights or disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) units for verification and follow-up. Child Protection and Human Rights components investigate and verify the information.

The child protection component refers incidents to UNICEF and other child protection partners. Their goal is timely and adequate responses, including psychosocial support for children. They offer family re-unification and reintegration services.

Roles and Responsibilities

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2.6 Child Protection 

Roles and Responsibilities

Civilian Child Protection Component

- Mission point of contact on child protection
- Advises mission leadership
- Liaises with POC Advisers and uniformed components on prevention activities
- Conducts training on child protection
- Monitors and reports on the six grave violations
- Engages in dialogue with parties to the conflict
- Coordinates with UNICEF and other relevant actors

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Key Message 10: The child protection component of the mission leads and coordinates the child protection work of the mission.

Child Protection Staff

Civilian child protection staff in UN peacekeeping operations include national and international CPAs, officers, assistants and UN volunteers.

Child protection staff – usually led by a senior child protection adviser – play a crucial role in implementing the child protection mandate of UN peace operations. As subject-matter experts, they play a number of key functions, including advising all the mission components and mission leadership, particularly the HOM, and working closely with other civilian and uniformed components.

Child protection staff work closely with UNICEF child protection specialists and other relevant UN agencies, NGOs and government authorities or organizations on these activities.

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2.6 Child Protection 

Roles and Responsibilities

Other Components

- SRSB/HOM
- POC adviser
- DDR and SSR components
- Human rights component
- Justice and corrections components
- Political affairs and civil affairs components
- Gender adviser and women's protection advisers

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Key Message 11: The child protection mandate is a whole-of-mission mandate. All components in a mission contribute to child protection in their daily tasks.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General / Head of Mission

- Leads the integration of obligations on child protection across all strategic and operational decisions, activities and processes of the mission.
- Promotes a mission-wide approach to implement the child protection aspects of the mission's mandate.
- Bears the overall responsibility within the mission for child protection planning, mainstreaming, training, coordination, monitoring and reporting, and dialogue with parties to conflict.
- Some units **work closely** with the child protection unit.

Protection of Civilians Team or Protection of Civilians Adviser

- Works with child protection staff on the coordination of prevention and response activities.
- Supports the mission on preparedness, planning and early warning of threats against civilians, including children.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) Components

- Ensure that mission and national strategies include provisions on the release of children from armed forces and armed groups as well as screening mechanisms for preventing the enrolment of children in security institutions.

Human Rights, Justice and Corrections Components

- Assist with investigations of human rights violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict
- Feed into information collection on the six grave violations against children
- Monitor and report on the illegal arrest of children.

Political Affairs and Civil Affairs Components

- Ensure that conflict analysis and mediation efforts are informed of child protection concerns and that child protection considerations are included in the overall mediation and national reconciliation efforts of the mission.

Gender Adviser and Women's Protection Adviser

- Help identify and address gender-specific protection needs of girls and boys in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- Cross-reference cases of conflict related sexual violence involving children.



Trainer Tips: Ask participants to brainstorm what roles other components have in child protection. Use lists of components from earlier lessons or ask people to name a component and its role. List points on a flipchart sheet and build on them. Prompt with the question: What about...? After the brainstorming, cover the content below as a summary review, reinforcing the group's growing knowledge base.

All Mission Personnel

- Effective child protection depends on commitment of mission staff in all components.
- The UN expects peacekeeping personnel to protect children and promote their rights.

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2.6 Child Protection 

Roles and Responsibilities

Special Roles of UN Police

- Mentor and advise host State police
- Provide training and capacity-building for host State police
- Carry out community-orientated policing
- Contribute to monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children

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Key Message 12: The police component can take specific action in support of child protection.

The UN Police, in consultation with the child protection component, may:

- Advise the host State police force on dealing with children in contact with the law to ensure the rights of children, including victims and witnesses
- Advise the host State police force on dealing with perpetrators
- Train members of the host State police on human rights, including child protection

- Report to the child protection or human rights units when children are arrested by the host State police, so they can follow up
- Contribute to the monitoring and reporting on the six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict by sharing information with child protection staff, who are responsible for monitoring and reporting.

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2.6 Child Protection 

Roles and Responsibilities

Special Roles of UN Military

- Provides physical protection of children
- Contribute to monitoring and reporting by sharing information with Child Protection component
- Protect children who are surrendered to the mission until the child protection component can assist
- Integrate child protection into the planning of all military operations

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Key Message 13: In daily tasks, UN military personnel contribute to a mission's child protection mandate.

Military peacekeepers:

- Provide physical protection to children facing imminent threats
- Contribute to the monitoring and reporting on the six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict by sharing information with child protection staff who are responsible for monitoring and reporting
- Provide alerts and information to child protection components and staff on child rights violations observed during regular work
- Support DDR, including in relation to implementation of child protection measures.
- Accept and protect children associated with armed forces and armed groups who are captured during operations or surrender to the mission until the civilian child protection section/Unit can assist.
- Integrate child protection into the planning of all military operations, especially those that use military force, and adopt mitigating measures to limit the risk to children in the vicinity of the operation.

What Individual Peacekeepers Can Do

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2.6 Child Protection 

What the Individual Peacekeepers Can Do

- Identify and be alert to protection threats and violations, including the six grave violations
- Record essential information about observed threats or violations
- Do not interview children
- Protect sensitive information
- Report to child protection staff and other experts

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Key Message 14: All UN peacekeeping personnel have a duty to protect children in their official functions and personal conduct. Peacekeeping personnel must be ready to take action if they witness violations against children.

- Take child protection seriously as an integral part of the job.
- Identify and be alert to protection threats and violations, including the six grave violations and other violations noted in the lesson.
- Record essential information about observed violations or threats: time, location, alleged perpetrator, victim and circumstances.
- Do not interview or interrogate children. Take note of the age and sex of the child. Gather information on his or her parents or caregivers, including if it concerns an unaccompanied or separated child.
- Protect security and confidentiality. Protect sensitive information. Don't take any actions that might put victims, witnesses, sources and other persons cooperating with the mission at risk.
- Report to child protection staff or other relevant units (for example, human rights, DDR) for verification and follow up, including referral of children to services.



Trainer Tips: Before showing the slides that recap DOs and DON'Ts, ask training participants to reflect on what they have heard in the lesson and name priority actions for peacekeepers – what peacekeepers **must do**, and what they **must not do**. Note points on a flipchart sheet. Use that flipchart sheet as primary reference and the slide to wrap-up. Issues related to conduct and discipline including provisions related to children, are covered in Module 3 – Lesson 3.2.



Key Message 15: Peacekeeping personnel must make a child's safety and well-being the highest priority. The best interest of the child guides all contact by peacekeepers with children.

While some situations may not appear harmful at first, they may cause harm to children or their families. Here are some dos and don'ts to help peacekeeping personnel make the right decisions.

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2.6 Child Protection 

DO

- Do report misconduct
- Do keep information confidential
- Do refer child victims of violations
- Do ask Child Protection Adviser for guidance, if needed



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Do's

- **Do** keep information on child protection confidential, as this information is often sensitive (e.g., names, locations).
- **Do** assist children when they surrender or are captured.
- **Do** refer children to appropriate services through the CPA.
- **Do** ask the CP staff for guidance if you are uncertain about how to respond to certain situations.

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2.6 Child Protection 

DON'T

- Do not use children for any services
- Do not interview children
- Do not take pictures of child victims of violations
- Do not give money, food or other products to children



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Don'ts

- **Don't** engage in sexual activity with children.
- **Don't** use children for labour or any other services.
- **Don't** interview children. However, **do** note down the basic information and share this with units trained to work with children, e.g. child protection or human rights units.
- **Don't** take pictures of children who have been victims of violations or use such pictures in reports. This includes children in custody or children associated with armed forces or armed groups.
- **Don't** give money, food or other items to children.
- **Don't** use schools or hospitals as bases for military activities.

Lesson Closing

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Trainer Tips: *If you have time, summarize the lesson, recalling the aim and learning objectives. Mention that the key messages support the learning objectives. Ask participants if they have questions. Ensure you distribute the Handout – Summary of Key Messages to all participants.*

Handout - Summary of Key Messages

Key Message 1: International law considers individuals under 18 years to be children, unless their country considers them adults at an earlier age. For the UN, all those under 18 are children, regardless of national law.

Key Message 2: The need for UN peacekeepers to fully take up their responsibilities for child protection **has never been greater**.

- As armed violence and conflict have become steadily more multidimensional, complex and chronic, violations against children have continued to rise.
- Children are negatively affected by new threats including fighting spreading into new areas, splintering of armed groups, intercommunal violence, an upsurge in the activity of armed groups and increasing threats of injury or death from explosive ordnance.

Key Message 3: Armed conflict disproportionately affects children. The needs of girls and boys may differ based on their gender roles during and after conflict.

Key Message 4: “War violates every right to a child”, Graça Machel concluded to the Secretary-General, following the 1996 landmark study, *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. These six grave violations occur often in situations of armed conflict:

1. Recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups
2. Killing and maiming
3. Rape and other forms of sexual violence
4. Attacks against schools and hospitals
5. Abduction
6. Denial of humanitarian access.

Key Message 5: Two organizations **lead** global efforts to address Children and Armed Conflict - **OSRSG-CAAC and UNICEF**.

- The UN created the **Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict** (OSRSG-CAAC) in 1996, with a specific mandate to protect children from the impact of armed conflict.
- The **United Nations Children’s Fund** (UNICEF) is the leading humanitarian and development agency working globally for the rights of every child.

Key Message 6: The legal framework obligates UN peacekeeping operations to protect children in armed conflict. International human rights and humanitarian law give children special protection and care.

Key Message 7: The UN upholds international human rights and humanitarian law. With respect to children and armed conflict, it has reinforced international law through a steadily stronger set of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and measures as well as in its policies, guidance and practices on child protection.

Key Message 8: Peacekeeping operations carry out their critical role on child protection within the framework of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict and mission-specific resolution. The 2017 Policy on Child Protection underlines the obligation of all UN peacekeeping operations personnel to uphold and respect children's rights and to support the implementation of the child protection mandate.

Key Message 9: As peacekeeping personnel, you need to be alert and able to identify violations against children. The UN Policy on Child Protection (2017) and the UN Handbook for Child Protection Staff (2023) provide guidance to missions in this area.

Key Message 10: The child protection component of the mission leads and coordinates the child protection work of the mission.

Key Message 11: The child protection mandate is a whole-of-mission mandate. All components in a mission contribute to child protection in their daily tasks.

Key Message 12: The police component can take specific action in support of child protection.

Key Message 13: In daily tasks, UN military personnel contribute to a mission's child protection mandate.

Key Message 14: All UN peacekeeping personnel have a duty to protect children in their official functions and personal conduct. Peacekeeping personnel must be ready to take action if they witness violations against children.

Key Message 15: Peacekeeping personnel must make a child's safety and well-being the highest priority. The best interest of the child guides all contact by peacekeepers with children.