

MODULE 3, LESSON 3

LEARNER’S HANDOUT

Guidelines for Dealing with Child Soldiers

UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION STABILIZATION MISSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (MONUSCO) GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH ARMED CHILDREN

- If a child comes to you, saying that he or she wants to withdraw from an armed group: Never hand over the child to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) or to the police. When a child associated with armed groups asks for assistance from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Military, you should immediately contact the Child Protection Section (CPS) in your area of operation and organize for the child to be handed over to CPS immediately.
- In case the child asking for your assistance is desperate to leave the armed force/group and claims to be in danger, it may be in his/her best interest that you get his/her weapon, and proceed as soon as possible to hand over the child to CPS or a child protection agency. Your judgment of the situation is on a case-by-case basis; you should be guided by your military instructions according to the security of your team and the security/best interest of the child.
- Outside of the Eastern provinces, according to the security context and local situation, if disarming and separating the child can wait for the formal process, prioritize this option; take note of the child’s location and commander, and inform the Child Protection Section, or a child protection disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) partner about the case, for them to go to the location and deal with the case.
- Always inform and explain to the child about the existing structures and procedures to leave armed forces/groups. In many cases, he/she does not know what is in place to help him/her get back to his/her former life and family.
- You need to be well prepared for similar situations: be sure to meet and discuss with the Child Protection Section in your area about what to do if you are confronted with particular situations and this type of case. As a principle, it is better for the child to go through an official organization, such as MONUSCO, which will ensure the child can join the reinsertion support programmes. Thus, he/she will be able to benefit from family tracing, if necessary; safe provisory shelter and care; professional training in



some cases; and obtain an official certificate proving his/her new civil status, which may help him/her clarify his/her status.

- Be sure not to expose yourself to allegation of abuses: MONUSCO military is not authorized to “interview” a child for more information than what is necessary to help the child access the Child Protection Section or a non-governmental organization (NGO) habilitated to help in those cases. Only MONUSCO CPS and its partner agencies are authorized to conduct interviews with the child. A child cannot be used to obtain details of armed groups’ military strategy or for military intelligence.

