



CHILD PROTECTION IN UN PEACEKEEPING

NEWSLETTER

January-March 2021

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the operational environment of United Nations peacekeeping operations with a Child Protection mandate. The pandemic has imposed severe logistical limitations for both field activities and technical support from Headquarters. However, despite the pandemic's constraints, Child Protection teams both in peacekeeping missions and at Headquarters have continued to effectively implement their mandate and address instances of grave violations against children, remarkably adapting to the current challenges also thanks to the close coordination with key partners such as UNICEF and the Office of the SRSG-CAAC. This newsletter highlights both activities at the HQ level and in the field from the first quarter of 2021 that illustrate the versatility and importance of contributions from Child Protection within peacekeeping.

Voices from the Field

NEW COMMITMENTS SIGNED IN THE DRC

Amid the backdrop of the pandemic, and complementing their numerous awareness raising workshops on Child Protection in January and February 2021, MONUSCO Child Protection Section in the DRC significantly advanced child rights as a result of their negotiation efforts. On 2 February 2021 in Goma, MONUSCO Child Protection facilitated the signing by the Nduma défense du Congo- Rénové (NDC-R) Bwira faction of a unilateral declaration to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations against children. Furthermore the Mouvement d'action pour le changement (MAC), Mai Mai Ilunga and Mai-Mai Apa na Pale-Makilo leaders also signed such commitments. With this, there are now 39 armed groups having signed commitments to protect children, resulting in the voluntary release of 2,167 children, including 308 girls since 2018.



Mathieu Ndongo Koni, MONUSCO Child Protection Adviser (left), and the NDC-R-commander Bwira (right) present the roadmap signed by NDC-R-Bwira in Goma on 2 February 2021.

SUCCESSFUL TRAINING DELIVERY AND SENSITISATION EFFORTS

BY MINUSCA CHILD PROTECTION TEAM

MINUSCA continued pursuing its essential awareness raising work on Child Protection, swiftly adapting to the imperatives of the pandemic. Between January and March 2021, over 650 community members, civil society, leaders, political parties, national armed defence and security forces were trained or sensitised within the framework of the 'ACT to Protect' campaign, following strict COVID-19 protection measures. A radio spot was also developed and aired over Guira FM to facilitate remote sensitisation.

Furthermore, on 10 March 2021, MINUSCA Senior Child Protection Adviser delivered a presentation to an online training organized by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), gathering representatives from the Ministries of Defense and Education of 20 states. The presentation focused on the implementation of the 2015 MINUSCA Directive on the Protection of Schools and Universities against Military Use.

MINUSCA Force Gender/Child Protection Focal Point also organised a three-day training (16 – 18 March 2021) aimed at the Mission's Military Gender Focal Points, during which MINUSCA Child Protection Section conducted a session on Child Protection.

For inquiries please contact the UN Department of
Peace Operations' Child Protection Team at:
pbps-childprotection-unhq@un.org
(DPO Child Protection Team, New York)

TRANSITION CHALLENGES IN SUDAN

Upon the withdrawal of the United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) on 31 December 2020, all substantive mandated mission activities, including key Child Protection tasks, were discontinued. The ensuing gaps in Child Protection capacity and activities (pending the deployment of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)) resulted in challenges in upkeeping monitoring and reporting capabilities on grave violations against children in Darfur. UNAMID Child Protection Team took a series of mitigating measures to limit the erosion of Child Protection gains in the region, including sensitisation activities and the establishment of local Child Protection committees in areas most affected by child recruitment.

In order to ensure an efficient transition, UNAMID Child Protection Team also focused on engaging with commanders of the Sudan Liberation Army–Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW)–Saleh Borsa faction, in order to secure firm commitments on the prevention of grave violations against children. Similarly the Team led a Training of Trainers for local Child Protection focal points in the Human Rights and Child Protection Unit established by the RSF under the "Sudan in Transition" initiative.



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AWARENESS RAISING TRAINING IN SOUTH SUDAN

In South Sudan, UNMISS Child Protection Team delivered an awareness raising training on the six grave violations in Mogok district (Jonglei). Attendees included high ranking officials of the Sudan's People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLM-IO) armed faction. Following the workshop, Major General Nyuot Dieu of the SPLM-IO reiterated his commitment to upholding the action plan signed in February of 2020 to end grave violations against children. The Commitment of both the South Sudan's People Defense Forces and main opposition forces to Child Protection, as well as the establishment of a technical committee to oversee the implementation of the action plan in September 2020, bears witness to the increased prominence of Child Protection considerations in South Sudan.

MINUSMA CHILD PROTECTION TEAM DELIVERS TRAININGS ON MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISM (MRM)

During the first quarter of 2021, MINUSMA Child Protection Team centered their efforts on delivering training to national partners involved in the implementation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). Training workshops were held between February and March 2021 across four regions (Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Ménaka) bringing together a total of 100 participants. The trainings aimed to support civil society actors' capacity to conduct MRM, improving their skills in monitoring, data collection and documentation related to the six grave violations.

The participants committed to implementing the MRM in their respective regions.

In parallel, MINUSMA Child Protection Team pursued its awareness raising activities, putting together a programme to mark the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers on 12 February 2021. The latter included a poem contest, two radio programmes, and an online awareness raising campaign.



UN Peacekeeping Operations with a Child Protection Mandate as of 31 December 2020. In Sudan, UNAMID was withdrawn on 31 December 2020, with a new special political mission (UNITAMS) currently being deployed.

Participants in the regional capacity building workshop on the MRM in Timbuktu

DPO AND SWEDINT DELIVER FIRST ONLINE CHILD PROTECTION COURSE FOR THE UN MILITARY

From 18 to 28 January 2021, DPO's Child Protection Team and Integrated Training Service (ITS), in partnership with the Swedish Armed Forces International Centre (SWEDINT), piloted the first online edition of their Specialized Course on Child Protection for the UN Military. After the annual in-person course planned for August 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions, the CP Team and ITS worked jointly to develop an online version of the training, based on the Specialized Training Materials for the UN Military. The pilot also marked the first time that a DPO protection course for a uniformed component was delivered via distance learning.

Participants in the online course included seven current military Child Protection Advisers from four peacekeeping missions (MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNMISS); four deploying military Child Protection Advisers; and five national military trainers from top Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs).

Overall, nine Member States (Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Indonesia, Morocco, Nepal, and Pakistan) were represented in the course, with participants (10 females, 6 males) based across 12 time zones.

The course (now in its sixth edition) continues setting an example of successful DPO-TCC partnership on training of uniformed peacekeeping personnel, in line with the Action4Peacekeeping. Its online version was piloted with critical support from 12 facilitators, including OMA Military Gender Advisor. Keynote speakers included DPO's Military Advisor, Lieutenant General Carlos Humberto Loitey, and the SRS-CAAC Virginia Gamba.



Find out more about our work: Check out the latest Manual for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations (https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/1._protection_-_4_manual_for_child_protection_policy.pdf)

CHILD PROTECTION IN STANDARD OPERATION PROCEDURES ON DETENTION

DPO Child Protection Team supported the Office of Rule of Law and Security institutions (OROLSI), the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights (OHCHR) in planning a webinar on 11th March 2021 of the new Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on the Handling of Detention in UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions. In the webinar, the Annex of the SOP focusing on 'Special Considerations for Children in Relation to the Standard Operating Procedures on the Handling of Detention in UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions' was presented to UN staff at mission and Headquarters level. The webinar provided mission staff with an understanding of roles and responsibilities of field actors on child detention as well as of the standard procedures to be implemented in the event of the detention of children by UN peacekeepers.

ANNUAL WATCHLIST POLICY WORKSHOP

On 28 and 29 January 2021, DPO Child Protection Team participated in the annual Watchlist Policy Workshop, jointly organised by the Watchlist and by the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs at Fordham University.

The organizers successfully adapted the annual event to the COVID-19 context, bringing together relevant CAAC actors worldwide in the virtual discussion.

VIRTUAL EVENT ON EARLY WARNING IN CHILD PROTECTION

On 12 February 2021, DPO Child Protection Team participated in a virtual event on early warning and early action in UN Peacekeeping, focusing on the key role of the Vancouver Principles in ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations in peacekeeping settings.

The virtual event was co-hosted by Canada, Rwanda and Uruguay, in partnership with DPO and the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security.

ROUND TABLE ON CAAC MARKS FRANCOPHONIE DAY

On 19 March 2021, DPO Child Protection Team joined a round table discussion on Children and Armed Conflict marking the International Day of the Francophonie. The event was co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, France and Luxembourg to the EU. The participants identified joint child protection training for EU civilian, military and police personnel and the UN-EU 2022-2024 strategic planning process as opportunities for greater EU engagement and closer EU-UN cooperation for the protection of children.