

CHILD PROTECTION

in United Nations
Peacekeeping

2014 Review



United Nations

DPKO would like to thank the following governments and organizations that have contributed to making the work of child protection in peacekeeping possible: Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Europe's New Training Initiative for Civilian Crisis Management (ENTRi).

For more information on DPKO's child protection work, please visit our website: www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/children

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FOREWORD BY USG LADSOUS

United Nations peacekeeping operations are working tirelessly to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict, particularly children. This publication provides an overview of the contribution of peacekeeping missions and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to the protection of children in 2014, as well as an outlook for the coming year.

To address child protection concerns, we have continued to work closely with key partners. We joined efforts with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF to support the “Children not Soldiers” campaign, aimed at bringing an end to the recruitment and use of children by national armed forces by 2016, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Sudan. With the same partners, we also developed and piloted new training materials on child protection for our civilian and military components, as well as conducted specialized trainings for Child Protection Advisers and expert trainers from the major troop-contributing countries.

I would like to thank our partners – the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict; UNICEF; the Department of Field Support; other United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes; Non-Governmental Organizations; troop- and police-contributing countries; financial supporters and the members of the Security Council – who all contribute and provide support or guidance to this important work.

All activities presented in this publication would not have been possible without our Child Protection Advisers in peacekeeping missions. They are deeply committed to protecting children in situations of armed conflict and I would like to use this opportunity to also thank each and every one of them. Every day, they monitor and report grave violations against children, they engage, advocate and negotiate with parties to the conflict, and they mobilize other protection actors to prevent violations affecting minors. Every day, they mainstream child-sensitive approaches in the work of peacekeeping operations, and they build the capacity of host state authorities and civil society, with the aim of promoting and protecting children’s rights and of combatting impunity. Given their critical role, we have taken measures to ensure that new peacekeeping missions such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, are provided with adequate child protection capacity.

DPKO will continue to promote a comprehensive child protection response, in coordination with key partners. In 2015, we will work with host states, our troop and police contributing countries, United Nations and other key partners to further guide and build our child protection capacity. Through these efforts, we will strive to enhance our collective ability to address grave violations against children and lay the foundations for a lasting peace.



UN Photo

FOREWORD BY SRSG ZERROUGUI

The year 2014 brought unprecedented challenges for the protection of tens of millions of children growing up in countries affected by conflict. Children were killed, maimed, abducted, sexually abused, recruited and used by armed forces or groups. Their schools and hospitals were under attacks. Millions of children were forced to leave everything behind and too often denied access to vital humanitarian assistance.

The proliferation of crises, coupled with the imperative to provide adequate assistance to children in countries affected by protracted conflict, has put our response mechanisms to the test.

There were also opportunities to make progress on an issue that is key to our common work: ending the recruitment and use of children. Building on an emerging global consensus that children do not belong in Government forces in conflict, in March 2014, I launched the campaign “Children, Not Soldiers” jointly with UNICEF. Our partnership with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is essential to reach our objective of ending the recruitment and use of children by government forces in conflict by the end of 2016.

The stories included in this publication highlight the dedication of child protection advisers and remind us all how crucial they are to improve the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Their work is also essential to ensure the success of the campaign.

As we are faced with urgent and increasingly challenging conflicts, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the child protection teams for their invaluable work. I look forward to a continued and even stronger cooperation in 2015.



UN Photo

2014 HIGHLIGHTS



Biannual Strategy Meeting for Child Protection Advisers (January 2014)

DPKO held its biannual strategy meeting for Child Protection Advisers (CPAs) in Austria, to capture new developments and practices, and discuss challenges in the mandate implementation.



“Children not Soldiers” Global Campaign (March 2014)

Launched jointly by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, and UNICEF, the campaign seeks to end the recruitment and use of children by national armed forces by 2016. In 2014, DPKO supported the campaign roll-out in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Sudan. (See page 10)



New Security Council Resolution on Children and Armed Conflict (March 2014)

SCR 2143 (2014) condemns the recruitment and use of children and the military use of schools by armed forces or armed groups. It includes concrete recommendations on actions to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and highlights the need for training of peacekeepers on child protection.

Children in Haiti.
(UN Photo/Logan Abassi)



- “Train, Act, Protect”: New Child Protection Training Materials for the UN military (April 2014)**

DPKO and partners have launched new training materials on child protection for UN military peacekeepers.
- New Peacekeeping Mission in the Central African Republic (April 2014)**

SCR 2149 (2014) established MINUSCA, a multidimensional UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic. The mission was deployed with a core mandate to protect civilians, including children.
- Country-Specific Reports on Mali, the DRC and South Sudan**

In 2014, the UN Secretary-General published country-specific reports on the situation of children and armed conflict in Mali, DRC and South Sudan. These are publicly available on the UN Secretary-General’s website.
- Guidance Note on Attacks against Schools and Hospitals (May 2014)**

The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, launched a Guidance Note on Attacks against Schools and Hospitals to help implement Security Council Resolution 1998.
- Train-the-Trainer Courses for military Peacekeepers (May, August and November 2014)**

Following the April 2014 launch of new child protection training materials for military personnel in peacekeeping, DPKO held train-the-trainer courses for over thirty key troop-contributing countries in Austria, Bangladesh and Sweden. (See page 8)
- Government of South Sudan Recommits to Action Plan (June 2014)**

In June, the South Sudan Government recommitted to its 2012 Action Plan to end the recruitment and use of children by its armed forces.
- New Guidance on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism – MRM (August 2014)**

DPKO, the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF jointly finalized the MRM Guidelines, MRM Field Manual and MRM Training Toolkit. (Visit www.mrmtools.org)
- First Training Course for Child Protection Advisers (November 2014)**

Organized jointly with the European Union’s New Training Initiative for Civilian Crisis Management (ENTRi) and the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), the first CPA specialized training course, held in Entebbe, Uganda, included 29 child protection officers from six UN missions. (See page 18)

UPDATES FROM HEADQUARTERS

“TRAIN, ACT, PROTECT”: A NEW STANDARD IN CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING FOR UN PEACEKEEPERS

On 8 April 2014, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous launched new training materials on child protection for UN peacekeepers, during a panel discussion held at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN entitled “Child protection training: why it matters and how to strengthen its implementation”. USG Ladsous presented the training materials to the panel, including the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui; the UNICEF Representative in South Sudan, Dr. Yasmin Haque; former UNAMIR Force Commander, Lieutenant General (ret) Roméo Dallaire; and former Military Adviser to DPKO, Major General (ret) Patrick Cammaert. “This training is all about better delivery of the mandate, higher efficiency of our troops and police and ultimately providing the children with better protection,” said USG Ladsous.

Providing a historical perspective on the training, USG Ladsous also reminded: “It has been 15 years now since the Security Council gave peacekeeping missions their first mandate on child protection. In the past years, a lot has been done. We recently conducted a survey for peacekeepers, and it was interesting to see that no less than five hundred respondents recommended additional pre-deployment training on child protection”.

“ This training is all about better delivery on the implementation of the mandate, higher efficiency of our troops and police and ultimately, let’s never forget, providing the children better protection. ”

Hervé Ladsous,
Under-Secretary-General
for Peacekeeping Operations

Panelists left to right:

Ms. Smith (moderator), Major General (ret) Cammaert, USG Ladsous, SRSG Zerrougui, Lieutenant General (ret) Dallaire and Dr. Haque.

(photo by Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN)



SRSG Zerrougui also emphasized the crucial role of soldiers' training in peacekeeping missions, stressing military peacekeepers are not deployed to fight, but to protect. "Peacekeepers are deployed where violations happen. They are the ones who can talk, eye to eye, with the military. They are the ones who can take action to protect. As soldiers, they have not received any training on child protection," she said. "It is crucial that peacekeepers are trained and sensitised on their roles".

Dr. Haque described the issue of children in armed conflict as one of the most difficult to address: "The risks faced by children in armed conflict are quite different from those faced by adults. This is not something that one would automatically know. It is important that we understand these risks and our role in protecting children".

Major General (ret) Cammaert emphasized the importance of implementing the training during pre-deployment rather than in-mission, arguing that contingents are often tested by armed groups as soon as they deploy, and have little time to absorb trainings on arrival. Lieutenant General (ret) Dallaire, a firm believer in training as an important prevention tool for protecting children in armed conflict, explained that "the training does not focus on rehabilitating or reintegrating children, but rather on taking action while children are being used as soldiers".

TRAIN-THE-TRAINERS: DPKO, UNICEF AND KEY TROOP-CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES JOIN FORCES

Following the launch of the specialized training material for military peacekeepers on child protection, developed jointly by DPKO, UNICEF, Save the Children and the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, DPKO conducted three successful train-the-trainer courses for 39 troop-contributing countries, in partnership with training centers in Austria, Bangladesh and Sweden.

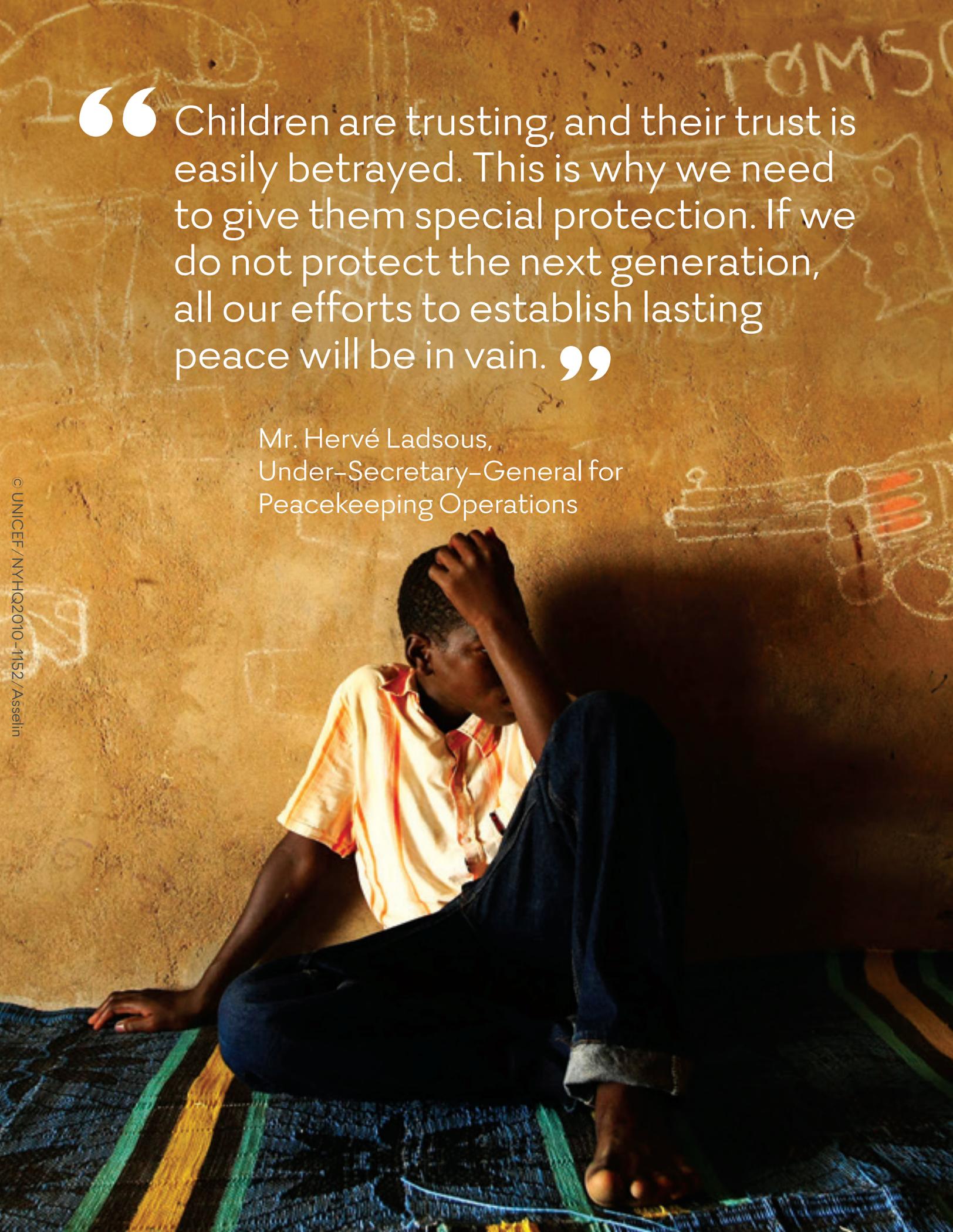
The format of the courses – some joined with protection of civilians (POC), others a stand-alone child protection course – showed that the materials can be flexibly used by national training centres. Through a film, presentation and exercises participants delved into real-life scenarios that they may encounter in the field, such as responding to a girl who has been raped, reacting to the presence of child soldiers in areas of operation, the use of schools by military forces, or cooperating with Child Protection Advisers and referring cases to UNICEF or other partners.

The highlight of this roll-out of the training materials was the five-day child protection course at SWEDINT in Sweden, taking place from 18 – 22 August. “We have the mandate to protect children, and now we know how do to it”, said a course participant. DPKO would like to thank the Governments of Austria, Bangladesh, Japan, Malaysia, Sweden and Uruguay for hosting and supporting courses, and the Governments of Austria, Canada, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, the United Kingdom and the United States for supporting the development of the new training materials. DPKO would also like to thank UNICEF, the AU, NATO and Save the Children staff, as well as DPKO Child Protection Advisers and expert trainers who participated in the trainings and shared their experiences.

The materials can be downloaded at: <http://research.un.org/en/peacekeeping-community>.



Participants in the child protection train-the-trainers course, Sweden, August 2014. (UN Photo)

A young boy is sitting on a blue and green patterned mat on the floor. He is wearing a yellow and orange striped shirt and blue jeans. He has his right hand on his forehead, looking down with a somber expression. The background is a textured, light brown wall covered in various chalk drawings, including a large handprint with orange fingers and the word 'TOM' partially visible. The lighting is warm and directional, coming from the side.

“ Children are trusting, and their trust is easily betrayed. This is why we need to give them special protection. If we do not protect the next generation, all our efforts to establish lasting peace will be in vain. ”

Mr. Hervé Ladsous,
Under-Secretary-General for
Peacekeeping Operations

“CHILDREN, NOT SOLDIERS” CAMPAIGN: A GOAL WITHIN REACH

In March 2014, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, and UNICEF launched the global campaign “Children, Not Soldiers”. Its objective is to end the recruitment and use of children by national armed forces in conflict by 2016. At the time of the launch, eight countries were concerned by the campaign: Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.

“The time has come for the world to unite and turn the page, once and for all, on the recruitment and use of children by security forces in conflict” said Special Representative Zerrougui, as she launched the campaign in New York.

Progress since the campaign launch:

- The UN Security Council endorsed the objectives of the campaign in Resolution 2143
- The campaign received broad support from Member States, UN, NGO partners, regional organizations and the general public
- DPKO and field missions, including UNAMID, UNMISS, MONUSCO and UNAMA, played a key role in support of the campaign:
- South Sudan recommitted to the Action Plan signed in 2012 and launched its “Children, not soldiers” campaign on 29 October 2014
- The government of Afghanistan endorsed a road
- Map to accelerate the implementation of its action plan
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) named a Presidential Advisor in charge of addressing sexual violence and child recruitment and launched a national campaign known as “Plus Jamais de Kadogo” (No More Child Soldiers)
- Sudan launched the “No child soldiers – Protect Darfur” campaign on 26 November 2014

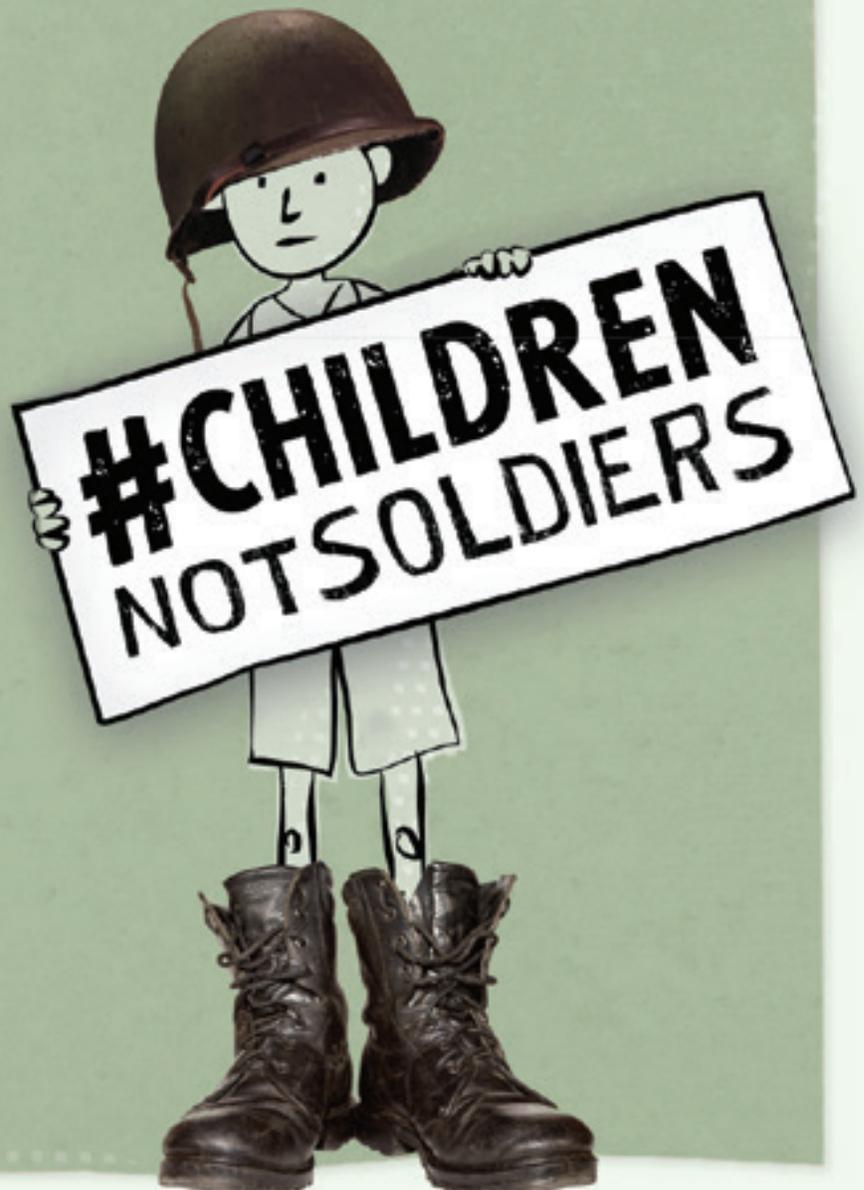


Poster for the national campaign “Plus Jamais de Kadogo” in the DRC



WE ARE CHILDREN NOT SOLDIERS

TELL ALL THE WORLD WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

MINUSMA: SCREENING OF ARMED GROUPS FOR CHILD RECRUITMENT

In July and September 2014, after lengthy negotiations with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), two armed groups based in the north of the country agreed to sign command orders prohibiting child recruitment and to allow the UN to conduct screening for child recruitment as part of a wider commitment to end grave violations against children. The two armed groups are the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and the Arab Movement of Azawad (Coordination).

The screening exercise took place on 16 September 2014 in the rural municipality of Ber, located 60 km from the city of Timbuktu. The joint mission to conduct the screening exercise included UNICEF Child Protection staff as well as MINUSMA staff from various sections (Child Protection, Human Rights, DDR, JMAC, UNPOL and Military Force). Solange Vasse, Senior Child Protection Adviser with MINUSMA, explains the screening process: "Among the combatants, we identified 12 individuals thought to be underage that were removed from the ranks of the armed groups for further screening. Because of lack of birth certificates and identification documents, we conducted individual interviews to assess their ages. We were able to conclude that some of the individuals were between the ages of 15 and 17, and therefore considered children under international law." Command orders prohibiting child recruitment were signed two days later, on 18 September 2014, and include provisions for punitive action in case of violations of the orders.

Ms. Vasse describes her plans for MINUSMA's Child Protection Unit for 2015: "We will continue to advocate for the release of children from the ranks of the armed groups in line with their commitments and are working to secure similar agreements with armed groups based in other locations. We will also continue negotiations for the signing of an Action Plan with the MNLA. In collaboration with UNICEF, we will establish centers to assist children who will be released, and advocate for the re-opening of schools that have been closed since the conflict started in 2012".

UNMISS TROOPS SUPPORT CHILD PROTECTION

The military component of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is present in conflict-affected areas, conducting field patrols on a regular basis. The UNMISS Child Protection Unit can therefore rely on the military component for support in collecting information on grave violations committed against children. To institutionalize this, the UNMISS Child Protection Unit has worked closely with the Force Commander to issue a Command Order in November 2014, which stipulates the role of the military in contributing to the monitoring and reporting of six grave violations. UNMISS furthermore established military child protection focal points in order to improve the monitoring and reporting of grave violations committed against children and to build the child protection capacity of the military component.

Building on the latest training modules on Child Protection for military peacekeepers, a total of 45 child protection focal points drawn from the various team sites in South Sudan benefited from a Child Protection Training-of-Trainers (TOT) Workshop held in Juba from 17–21 November 2014. Participants were trained on knowledge and skills needed to prevent and address grave violations against children, including the impact of armed conflict on children in the context of South Sudan, children's rights and protection of children, monitoring and reporting on the six grave violations committed against children and training methodology. As a next step, these focal points will roll out the child protection training for their respective troops.

One of the challenges facing the UNMISS Child Protection Unit in conflict-affected areas is the short duration of assignments of troops and Military Liaison Officers (MLOs), which can range from six months to one year. This is why continuous training of military child protection focal points and pre-deployment training of troops is crucial. This year alone, UNMISS provided induction training for 2,236 new troops and MLOs. With this training, the military will contribute to the protection of children by engaging parties to the conflict on preventing and ending the recruitment and use of children and the military use of schools, and by conducting verifications of incidents in conflict-affected areas.

Training-of-trainers course for UNMISS military personnel,
South Sudan, November 2014.
(UN Photo/JC McIlwaine)



UNAMID LAUNCHES “NO CHILD SOLDIERS – PROTECT DARFUR” CAMPAIGN

El Fasher, 28 November 2014 – As part of its Darfur-wide campaign geared to prevent the recruitment of children as soldiers, on 26 November 2014, the African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) reached out to the Masteriha community, North Darfur, in an event attended by more than 1,000 men, women and school children.

During the event, the pupils of the Masteriha mixed school performed songs pertinent to the occasion as a show of solidarity with issues related to the protection of children. UNAMID, accompanied by members of the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and UNICEF, distributed caps, scarves, T-shirts and vests with messages promoting peace in Darfur, the protection of children and against the use of child soldiers.

“We believe that with your continued support, child protection is in progress,” remarked Boubacar Dieng, Head of UNAMID’s Children Protection Unit, in his speech at the event. “The protection of children will not be complete without peace in Darfur,” he said.

Tribal leader Sheikh Musa Hilal appreciated the launch of the campaign in the area and reiterated the Command Order he issued on 26 July 2013 prohibiting communities under his leadership to use children in tribal clashes. He also reiterated his commitment to a Community-based Strategic Plan against child soldiering initiated by him on 6 October 2014, which was endorsed by leaders from the Beni Hussein, Tamma, Fur, Gimir and Awlad Janoub tribes.

Sheikh Hilal outlined that he has been working on social reconciliations at the grassroots level in order to create tribal harmony. “When it comes to peaceful coexistence, we have had a number of conferences in different areas for the sake of stability and security in Darfur,” he said. Additionally, he called on the humanitarian community, UNAMID and the UN agencies to engage in further activities in the field of development in the region.

The Head of UNAMID Sector North, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, emphasized that the Mission’s mandate is focused on protecting civilians, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance and contributing to peace and reconciliation efforts.

“Children are the backbone of society and we want them to be educated instead of being recruited,” said Mohamed Izzat, the Secretary-General of the Reziegat Council, calling for the provision of health, education and water services for nomadic communities.



Girls in Sudan
(UN Photo/Albert González Farran)

On behalf of the youth in Masteriha, Ramadan Ahmed Bakheit condemned all forms of recruitment and use of child soldiers and highlighted the role of youth in promoting peaceful coexistence. “Despite the scarcity of resources, we have been making a positive impact in the community through the launch of sports events and symposiums to enhance local awareness about common issues,” said Mr. Bakheit.

Ms. Amira Mohammed, a representative of women groups, drew attention to the concerns and problems faced by women and girls. She said that women suffer from early marriages and problems related to reproductive health. “Women need to be empowered through access to livelihood activities, education and literacy classes” she remarked.

MINUSTAH SUPPORTS ADOPTION OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAW IN HAITI

Human trafficking is a major issue in Haiti, with children as the main victims. “Child Trafficking: Society Puts on the Brakes”, an article on the inability to hold child traffickers in Haiti accountable for their crimes, was prominently featured on MINUSTAH’s website in 2013. It describes in detail the ordeals faced by victims: “As I regained consciousness, I realized that ants were climbing up my legs, biting me. I ached all over, especially in my lower abdomen. I didn’t know where I was”, recounts a 13-year-old girl, who was found by a Haitian NGO only a few steps from the border. She had been abused by a group of youth after a stranger had offered to bring her to a neighboring country for work.

Today, child trafficking in Haiti is illegal. A law on human trafficking was adopted by Parliament in June 2014. Sterlinda Vital, Child Protection Officer with MINUSTAH, explains the process that led to this change: “Together with our UN Police, we work closely with IBESR (Institut du Bien-Etre Social et de Recherches), which is part of the Haitian Ministry of Social Affairs, and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), on monitoring and reporting violations of children’s rights related to human trafficking. Our biggest challenge was the lack of a comprehensive legal framework that could help fight impunity against traffickers.”

“The Parliament has come a long way and MINUSTAH has been instrumental in supporting parliamentarians with technical advice. The new law includes provisions under which child trafficking is punished by imprisonment and a fine of up to 200,000 Gourdes (4,300 USD / 3,400 EUROS)”, said Ms. Vital. Next steps include training and awareness-raising campaigns on the new law, including for magistrates.





“ When children see a peacekeeper they know that we will do them no harm, that we are here to protect them. ”

General Babacar Gaye,
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
and Head of Mission, MINUSCA

CHILD PROTECTION ADVISERS ARE TRAINED IN ENTEBBE: MORE THAN A PILOT TRAINING

Pursuing a common goal, child protection teams working for UN Peacekeeping operations gathered for a five-day pilot training for Child Protection Advisers in Entebbe, Uganda, in November 2014. 29 participants from six UN missions attended the training, namely MINUSMA (Mali), MONUSCO (DRC), UNAMA (Afghanistan), UNAMID (Sudan), UNMISS (South Sudan) and UNOCI (Ivory Coast). Facilitators and trainers included staff from UNICEF, DPKO, MONUSCO, UNAMID and UNMISS. "It was wonderful to meet so many field colleagues who are working hard on a daily basis, with dedication and considerable risk. They are the heroes of implementing the CAAC mandate", said Dee Brillenburg Wurth, Head of the Child Protection Team in MONUSCO.

The course covered a wide variety of topics including legal standards and policy work for child protection, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), engagement with armed forces and armed groups to release children from their ranks, and tools for effective mainstreaming or advocacy on CAAC. The training also included sessions on training skills and interactive exercises such as role-playing and scenario exercises on interviewing children.

"The topics were key for us to better respond to the needs of children affected by armed conflict", said a participant from UNAMID. A Child Protection Officer from MONUSCO added: "The training was a great opportunity to share our experiences and challenges with peers from around the world. I came out of the session with enormous intellectual wealth that I will share with my colleagues in the field. I believe that if we put into action what we were taught, we will make a difference for children."

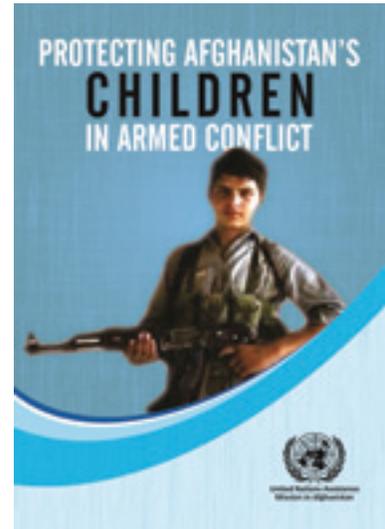
This pilot training course was co-funded by Europe's New Training Initiative for Civilian Crisis Management (ENTRi) and DPKO and organized jointly by the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR) and DPKO. Another session is planned in 2015, with a view to train all peacekeeping child protection staff. DPKO would like to thank the government of Austria for supporting the development of the training materials.



UN Photo

UNAMA BOOKLET: “PROTECTING AFGHANISTAN’S CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT”

Published by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and officially launched in New York City on 12 May 2014, the 61-page booklet “Protecting Afghanistan’s Children in Armed Conflict: Principles of Sharia Law, National Legislation, International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law on Children and Armed Conflict” focuses on the six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict from the perspective of three distinct bodies of law. “The booklet is the result of a series of discussions, roundtable meetings, research, and collaboration between UNAMA and numerous respected Afghan religious leaders, scholars and experts from different religious and academic institutions,” said Ján Kubiš, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan. “It represents a meaningful partnership between all parties.”



UNAMA reached out to religious leaders and scholars to develop well-grounded arguments designed to resonate with local communities. The booklet was meant to bridge the gap between differing cultural principles and social norms, highlighting the complementarity of Islam with national and international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and has been unanimously endorsed by the Islamic scholars, religious leaders and experts in international law involved in the consultation process. It has served as a context-specific advocacy tool, and has not only helped to raise awareness of the rights of children in armed conflict, but has also helped to foster accountability and compliance by parties to conflict with international child-protection standards and principles of Sharia law. “Ultimately, the booklet is helping to prevent grave violations against children,” said Suki Nagra, a Senior Human Rights Officer with UNAMA. “This work has enabled us to engage with armed opposition groups from an Islamic perspective.”

Six months following the booklet’s launch, Ms. Nagra described it as a success: “We published 6,000 copies in English, Dari and Pashto,” she said. “We organized grassroots events and radio campaigns to reach different communities. The booklet is now in libraries and schools across the country.” In Afghanistan, children under the age of 15 make up approximately 43 per cent of the total population. By taking into consideration the local community’s cultural principles, social norms and religious beliefs, the booklet has helped the Mission’s prospects of having a greater impact on the protection of children in Afghanistan.

PROFILE OF CHILD PROTECTION ADVISERS

PROFILE: ADELE UWIMANA, MONUSCO CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

“I love my work. I love working with children and for children”, said Adele Uwimana, a Child Protection Officer with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Born and raised in Goma, in the east of the country, Ms. Uwimana was forced to leave DRC in 1994, when the security situation became chaotic. She studied law in Rwanda and later worked as a Legal Adviser for Lawyers without Borders. She has been working with MONUSCO since 2010. “I use my legal skills when we arrest perpetrators of grave violations committed against children”, she said.

The situation of children affected by armed conflict is improving in the DRC, especially since the signing of an Action Plan between the Congolese Government and the UN to end the recruitment and use of children by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC). “Whereas some years ago the recruitment and use of children was a big problem, it’s been a while since I’ve seen child soldiers within the FARDC. This is very good news. I’ve advocated and worked very hard for the release of children, and the Action Plan has made it much easier to achieve this objective”, she explained.

In 2014, with the help of local NGOs, a significant number of children were also released from armed groups. In some cases, children managed to escape: “They run to MONUSCO bases for help or seek help from NGOs that call on MONUSCO for military protection, including helicopter transport to Goma”, Ms. Uwimana explained. “After we document their cases, the children are transferred to a MONUSCO transit camp for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), where they receive medical treatment and new clothes. Within a day, they are handed over to UNICEF partners and taken to Transit and Orientation Centers (CTOs) where they receive psychological care until they can be reunited with their families or communities. This process sometimes requires mediation because families or communities are unwilling to receive the children. This happens when children have been forced to commit crimes against their communities by the armed groups that recruited them.”

Working to establish trust and to build a safe environment for children is an essential part of Ms. Uwimana’s daily work. “We spend all day at DDR camps in order to build relationships with the children. This is especially important when documenting cases, as we need to take testimonies from



Adele Uwimana,
MONUSCO Child Protection
Officer, during a joint
protection team mission
(MONUSCO Photo)

children. Our work is always guided by the best interest of the child.” Ms. Uwimana remembers one particular story of a 13-year-old girl whose parents were killed during an ambush, and who was separated from her siblings and recruited by an armed group. “For two years, she was raped repeatedly by at least 20 men. At 15, she managed to escape when fetching water and ran to a MONUSCO base. I documented her case in the DDR transit camp. She complained of having severe headaches and stomach pains. A nurse confirmed that she was HIV positive.” Ms. Uwimana described how terrifying the situation had been for the young girl. “I knew that I had to fight for her so that she could at least get proper health care. I liaised with an international medical NGO to get her into a program for HIV-positive girls. The NGO also worked on tracing her family”. The work Ms. Uwimana is accomplishing is bittersweet. The challenges are enormous and often heartbreaking, but the rewards are priceless.

PROFILE: CHARLES FOMUNYAM, MINUSCA CHILD PROTECTION ADVISER

Charles Fomunyam was a police officer for 24 years in his native Cameroon before joining the UN in Kosovo, where he conducted war crime investigations as part of the UN Police (UNPOL). He then joined the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) as a Training Officer for UNPOL, and started his career in child protection when he became a UN Volunteer with the Child Protection Section. He went on to work as a Child Protection Officer with the MONUSCO for two years and with UNAMID for three years, before becoming the Child Protection Adviser with the UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

One of Mr. Fomunyam's main responsibilities in the Central African Republic (CAR) is to engage with armed groups who recruit and use children. He not only negotiates the release of children, but he also trains members of armed groups on child protection, which often leads to positive behavioral changes. "When I came to the Central African Republic, I saw many children with the ex-Séléka group and the anti-Balaka militia", he says. "It's not easy for us to access or dialogue with these types of armed groups, and so with UNICEF, as co-chairs of the MRM Country Task Force, we've had to establish networks and find avenues for reaching out to them."



Charles Fomunyam,
MINUSCA Child Protection Adviser
(UN Photo)

Dialogue with armed groups in CAR is becoming more challenging given the changing face of the conflict. Armed groups in CAR have splintered into separate factions, each lacking any clear chain of command, making it difficult for the UN to identify viable interlocutors for dialogue. Another important challenge is that most of these armed groups and splintered factions are based within their communities, making it very difficult for child protection actors to differentiate between children who are associated with the groups from the rest of the children who are members of those communities.

Part of the dialogue with armed groups includes explaining to them the definition of a child, which is particularly important because commanders of armed groups sometimes challenge the definition. Mr. Fomunyan also sensitizes them on the definition of a child soldier, which is broader than just a child carrying a gun, and includes other support functions. Mr. Fomunyan has engaged with and trained armed groups in the capital, Bangui, and in more remote areas of the country. In 2014, over 2,300 children were released from the anti-Balaka militia, out of an estimated 10,000 children associated with armed groups.

2015 OUTLOOK

10-year anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1612

2015 will mark the 10-year anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005), which established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on the six grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. Resolution 1612 also established the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which reviews country-specific reports on children and armed conflict and makes recommendations for action. It is the Security Council's only thematic working group. Today, the MRM has been established in 15 countries.

Lessons Learned Study and review of the DPKO and DFS Child Protection Policy

In 2015, DPKO will conduct a Lessons Learned Study on the implementation of the 2009 DPKO/DFS Child Protection Policy. This study, supported by the Government of Switzerland, will enable DPKO to report to the General Assembly Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34) on the impact, best practices, lessons learned and challenges in the implementation of the DPKO/DFS Child Protection Policy. The study will also enable DPKO, in close coordination with DPA, OSRSG CAAC, UNICEF and other key stakeholders, to review and update the Child Protection Policy and related guidance and training materials, as well as the role and placement of Child Protection Advisers in peace operations.

Concept Note on Child Protection Coordination between Humanitarians and Peacekeeping Operations

During the 2014 annual meeting of the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), child protection coordination between humanitarian actors and UN missions was identified as a guidance gap. A concept note will be developed in 2015 to enable child protection sub-clusters and UN missions to better coordinate at field level in order to avoid duplication of efforts and improve the protection of children. Ten countries have been selected for consultation, including Afghanistan, CAR, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

Development of Child Protection Training for UN Police

Today, over 12,000 police officers serve in UN Peacekeeping Missions. DPKO is in the process of developing child protection training materials tailored specifically for UN Police, in close collaboration with UNICEF, OSRSG CAAC, UNODC, and relevant NGOs, as well as close consultation with member states. UN Police staff and DPKO Child Protection Advisers are also involved in the process to ensure that the materials meet the needs of the target audience. DPKO would like to thank the United Kingdom for their generous financial support for this project. Furthermore, DPKO seeks to host a Training of Trainers for military trainers from troop contributing countries and will plan yearly capacity building training sessions for child protection staff jointly with ASPR, UNICEF and OSRSG CAAC.

PRIMERO

The development of a new information management platform called PRIMERO is being led at global level by UNICEF to integrate several existing information management systems, including the CP IMS, GBV IMS and MRM IMS. PRIMERO will be rolled-out in 2015 and will be adaptable to the needs of peacekeeping missions to monitor and report on the six grave violations committed against children.

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