

tool 60 Mainstreaming Child Protection in Peace Processes

Checklist

Post-conflict situations provide opportunities for government restructuring, legislative overhaul and “do it back better”. As such, peace processes represent a valuable entry point for the implementation of Resolution 1612 by including child protection considerations in structural reforms aiming to address the underlying causes of conflict and insecurity. However, the mainstreaming of child protection in peace processes still remains a largely unfulfilled aspect of the children and armed conflict agenda. The following checklist highlights key policy considerations to strengthen the integration of child protection in peace processes.

Security sector reform (SSR):

- Include child protection in military training and standard operating procedures, as well as in military guidance as appropriate.
- Establish child protection units in national security forces.
- Establish detailed recruitment procedures which include effective age assessment mechanisms to prevent underage recruitment.
- Establish an effective vetting mechanism to ensure that no suspected perpetrator of grave violations of children’s rights is integrated or otherwise recruited into the security forces.
- Ensure that captured child soldiers are always treated in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law, and promptly handed over to child protection actors.
- Adopt measures to protect schools and hospitals from attack and to prevent the military use of schools in contravention of applicable international law.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR):

- Require that release and reintegration of children associated with armed actors be carried out at all times, even during a conflict, and that actions to prevent child recruitment be continuous.

- Ensure complete age-specific assessment to inform DDR policy and program design and implementation and, given the complexity of the social reintegration of children, guarantee that child specific DDR mechanisms remain in place after national reintegration of adult combatants is completed.
- Adopt standard operating procedures for the immediate transfer of children escaped, captured or released from armed groups to competent state social services, child protection actors or relevant international bodies.
- Confer to a DDR Commission or institution the obligation to report the name and status of children undertaking the DDR process and monitor their reintegration with special attention to factors leading to re-recruitment.
- Provide assistance for the reintegration of former child soldiers including psychosocial support, education, vocational training, employment opportunities and support to their communities.
- Support children with necessary counselling, including help to: overcome trauma; develop self-esteem and gain life skills; learn about reintegration and livelihood opportunities; and receive peace education and non-violent conflict resolution training to help them regain a sense of the social norms and routines of civilian life.
- Ensure employment trainings are driven by the realities of the labor market and oriented towards specific job opportunities.

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- Conduct a DDR gender assessment and design strategies, in particular with regards to reintegration, which meet the differentiated needs of girls associated with armed actors and their dependents.
- Promote the participation of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups as well as other war-affected children and the community as a whole in the development of assistance to reintegration initiatives so that inequalities and unfair treatment are avoided.

Justice sector reform and rule of law:

- Promote the ratification of international and regional instruments relevant for the protection of children and provide support for their implementation.
- Advocate for the introduction of legislative amendments aiming to strengthen the accountability framework for the protection of children.
- Support the provision of technical assistance for the improvement of birth registration, including nationality legislation.
- Support the establishment of a juvenile justice system in line with international norms and standards.
- Support the establishment of restorative justice, diversion and alternatives to child incarceration that promote the child's reintegration into society in line with the principle of deprivation of liberty as a measure of last resort.
- Ensure the adoption of clear policies and safeguards on the treatment and transfer of children deprived of their liberty for association with armed groups.
- Prioritize criminal investigations and prosecutions of individuals suspected of grave violations against children, including through the provision of adequate resources for the relevant mandated institutions.
- Train and sensitize judges, lawyers, prosecutors, law enforcement officers and social workers on child protection legislation and the administration of juvenile justice.
- Request governments to regularly publish information on the number of prosecutions and convictions for grave violations against children.

Peace negotiations:

- Remind parties to conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, in particular those concerned with the rights of the child.
- Call on parties to conflict to take measures to protect civilians, particularly children, from all forms of violence and abuse, in particular recruitment and abduction, killing and maiming of children, sexual and gender-based violence, attacks against schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access.
- Ensure that the concept of child soldiers is clearly defined to include all children associated with armed actors independently of the type of recruitment or how children are being used by the armed actor.
- Require parties to acknowledge the existence of child soldiers in their ranks, disclose to a Monitoring Ceasefire Committee their number, location and identity, and agree to the immediate and unconditional release of all associated girls and boys.
- Request grave violations against children to be recognized as a "prohibited act" which constitutes a violation of a ceasefire agreement and mandate a monitoring body to monitor and report such violations.
- Ensure the inclusion of child rights expertise in the mediation process, and facilitate consultation with child rights experts and children to improve accountability and ownership.
- Ensure that any peace agreement does not include amnesty or *de facto* impunity for alleged perpetrators of recruitment and use of children and other serious crimes.

related tools

- 🔗 **tool 51** – Factsheet 'Linking monitoring, prevention and response to grave violations'
- 🔗 **tool 55** – Guiding questions 'Planning advocacy on the grave violations'