

# tool 8

## The Role of Peacekeeping Missions in the MRM

### Factsheet

In countries where there is a peacekeeping mission, the Head of the Mission (Special Representative of the Secretary-General) co-leads the MRM together with UNICEF. UN peacekeeping missions typically include civilian, military and police components. The purpose of this factsheet is to clarify the role of peacekeeping mission actors in the MRM and outline opportunities for collaboration for NGOs.

#### Civilian component:

Most peacekeeping missions implementing the MRM have Child Protection Advisers (UNMISS, MONUSCO, UNAMID, MINUSMA, UNOCI, UNAMI, MINUSTAH and MINUSCA)<sup>4</sup>. Child Protection Advisers conduct systematic monitoring, reporting and verification of grave violations against children. They also engage in advocacy to prevent grave violations against children and support the preparation of reports required under the MRM.

In doing this, Child Protection Advisers coordinate with all relevant mission components (especially Human Rights, UN Police, Military, Women Protection Advisers). Together with UNICEF child protection staff, Child Protection Advisers are the MRM focal points for NGOs at field level: they can receive information on grave violations and report it to the MRM Country Task Force, and they conduct verification missions. Child Protection Advisers also participate in coordination fora, such as child protection working group meetings, and act as the main contact point for any NGOs that want to engage with the peacekeeping missions.

#### Military component:

Every UN mission is different. Their mandate and configuration derives from Security Council Resolutions. Some have strong military components, others are political missions without a military component.

The UN does not have its own troops; it is member states that contribute military personnel ('troop contributing countries') to each particular mission. Each contingent is trained by their respective country, but child protection is part of the pre-deployment training for all peacekeeping forces.

On the ground, military peacekeepers are present or patrol areas affected by conflict, including remote locations. Peacekeeping forces are not experts in child protection, but they support the work of civilian Child Protection Advisers and thus contribute to the MRM by:

- **Alerting** civilian staff within the peacekeeping mission to instances of grave violations they may have witnessed or been informed of (for instance by NGOs).
- **Facilitating contact** between UN civilian staff and conflict-affected communities.
- **Providing security** for monitoring and verification missions by UN civilian staff.

Most peacekeeping missions implementing the MRM also have a protection of civilians mandate, which means that they can proactively use force to protect civilians, including children, from an *imminent threat of physical violence*. Using force is a measure of last resort. Missions have developed many other tools such as early warning mechanisms, joint protection team missions and their visible presence to deter violations.

<sup>4</sup> UNAMI and UNSOM also have Child Protection Advisers, but they are political missions under the supervision of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) as opposed to peacekeeping missions. In missions where there is no dedicated child protection team, day-to-day implementation of the MRM is done by other UN civilian staff within the mission, such as human rights officers.

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## Opportunities for NGOs to engage with military peacekeepers in relation to the MRM:

- **Primary contact points:** peacekeepers are sometimes the only UN actors seen on a regular basis in remote areas and may be the only points of contact for communities or local NGOs. They can alert the UN system to incidents or reports and facilitate contact with appropriate civilian child protection staff within the peacekeeping mission for follow-up.
- **Protection:** to prevent violations, military peacekeepers liaise with the community to gather information on protection threats. They are ultimately present for security and protection, and NGOs can seek their assistance if required.

**Main challenge to NGO interaction with peacekeepers:** In some situations, depending on the mandate of the mission and on the particular context, peacekeeping forces may be perceived by armed actors and/or local communities as parties to the conflict. NGOs should always apply appropriate risk assessment before deciding whether and how to engage with peacekeeping forces. Their primary focal point for child protection concerns within a peacekeeping mission should always remain the civilian Child Protection Adviser (or other appropriate civilian component of the mission).

## Do's and don'ts when engaging with military peacekeepers:

- **Do not** ask a peacekeeper to interview a victim or witness of a grave violation. Distinguish between UN child protection or human rights staff and military UN personnel. UN child protection staff is adequately trained to verify violations, military staff can only report to or facilitate contact with child protection staff.
- Assess the perception of peacekeepers among local communities and armed actors before deciding whether or how to engage with peacekeepers; always consider the civilian Child Protection Adviser as your primary focal point for all engagement with the peacekeeping mission on child protection concerns.
- Ensure that the general approach to peacekeepers is consistent and coherent within your organization.

## related tools

- 🔗 [tool 1](#) – Glossary of terms on the MRM
- 🔗 [tool 7](#) – Factsheet 'Key actors in the MRM'