



Implementing the Vancouver Principles Lessons from Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay

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Cover photo: The MINUSCA Pakistan Contingent organized an art therapy session for children in June 2020
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Acronyms

AU	African Union
CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CPA	Child Protection Advisor
CPFP	Child Protection Focal Point
CPTM	Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENOPU	National Peace Operations Training Institute of Uruguay
EU	European Union
FET	Female Engagement Team
FPU	Formed Police Unit
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
KAIPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center
MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional Mission to the Central African Republic
MONUSCO	UN Multidimensional Mission to Congo
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
ToT	Training of Trainers
T/PCC	Troop- and Police-contributing Country
UN	United Nations
UNETCHAC	Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada launched the **Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers** in 2017.¹ This political declaration calls on Member States to prevent the recruitment and use of children through 17 distinct commitments across the peacekeeping cycle.

This study compares the efforts of five endorsing, troop- and police- contributing countries – **Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay** – to implement the Vancouver Principles, including by developing policies, training personnel on the prevention of child recruitment, caring for peacekeepers’ mental health, and supporting UN processes that bolster child protection. The findings reveal that effective implementation of the Vancouver Principles hinged on the interaction of political leadership, sustained training and preparedness, and strong mission-level support and child protection systems.

Limited Awareness and Documentation of the Vancouver Principles

In 2024 alone, the UN verified more than 7,400 cases of child recruitment or use across 23 situations of concern.² UN, regional, or member-led peacekeeping operations were present in 18 of the 23 situations with child recruitment, yet interviews with global experts and security personnel revealed low awareness of the Vancouver Principles, including among those working directly in mission environments.

Furthermore, while this study identified many examples of good practices, few were reported by Member States themselves. Instead, Watchlist identified and categorized examples from the five countries that aligned with the Principles. This underscores the need for better documentation and sharing of lessons learned and good practices, in line with Vancouver Principle 16.

Towards a Holistic Approach

From the examples of Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay, the study argues that effective implementation depends on a **holistic and multi-pronged approach**, combining political and diplomatic action, training and preparedness, and operational practice:

Political and diplomatic action

All five countries took concrete steps during their terms on the UN Security Council to support child protection in mission mandates and to hold perpetrators accountable. This highlights that all Member States — even those deploying few troops or police — can meaningfully implement the Principles.

¹ Government of Canada, [The Vancouver Principles](#).

² United Nations, [Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict 2025, A/79/878-S/2025/247](#), para. 7.

This study found that such policy-level actions, both through regional or UN bodies, strengthened the mission frameworks and impelled countries to adhere to stronger child protection standards in mission preparation and deployment.

Training and preparedness

All five countries included child protection in pre-deployment training, most often using the UN's core training package. **Uruguay** and **Senegal** took this further by institutionalizing training-of-trainers courses on child protection within the armed forces. In **Italy** and **Ghana**, training emphasized international humanitarian law as well as a commitment to training peacekeepers from around the world. While specialized trainings on child protection were available to troops and police in all five countries, gaps remained in deploying trainees in missions and in Child Protection Focal Point roles.

Operational practice within missions

Limited metrics on in-mission performance of troops and police hindered the ability to track State-led implementation of certain Vancouver Principles. However, evidence of personnel putting the Principles into action existed. For instance, all five countries deployed Child Protection Focal Points (Principle 4) as per requirements by regional bodies or the UN. However, these focal points relied on in-mission support from civilian child protection experts. In mission contexts, **Senegal**, **Pakistan**, and **Ghana** also published examples of prevention-related community engagement activities. Peacekeepers from **Italy** and **Senegal** also described the importance of a strong operational culture, derived from initial and in-service training that emphasized respect for international humanitarian law.

Child Protection Capacity in Peace Operations Remains Critical

Peacekeepers and experts consistently emphasized that clear mandates, standard operating procedures, and adequate in-mission capacity were critical enablers for in-mission implementation.

Where these conditions were weak or inconsistent, peacekeepers reported limitations in their ability to act to protect children.

Ways Forward

The findings point to a need for deeper State-led ownership of the Vancouver Principles, starting by assessing their progress on implementation and sharing best practices. Furthermore, experts pointed to regional and member-led operations as a “new area of growth” for the Principles.³ Member States and advocacy organizations should further contextualize the Principles for different peace and security architectures, including political missions and member-led coalitions, and raise awareness among key stakeholders.

³ Interview, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on CAAC, December 12, 2025.

Vancouver Principles in Action

How do Member States protect children and prevent child recruitment through peacekeeping? From diplomatic efforts at the UN Security Council to the creation of national policies or trainings, there are many ways to turn commitment into action. See examples from **Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay**:

Over the past decade, all five countries supported the renewal of **mission mandates** with child protection (**Mandates**), as well as **sanction regimes (Sanctions)** that included provisions on child recruitment.

In 2025, **Ghana** began piloting child-recruitment related early warning indicators through its National Peace Commission (**Early Warning**).

Italy has instated rigorous mental health support for peacekeepers, before, during, and after deployment, inclusive of psychosocial support during training activities that prepare peacekeepers for encounters with children (**Mental Health**).

In 2020, **Pakistani** soldiers deployed to the Central African Republic led art-therapy sessions for children affected by the armed conflict (**Prevention**).

Senegal integrated a five-day Training of Trainers on Child Protection into the annual Action Plan of the Gender Division of its armed forces. The Training aligned with African Union and Department of Peace Operations (**Planning; Doctrine, Education, and Training**).

In 2020, **Uruguay** launched the world's first Child Protection in Peacekeeping Policy (**Planning**) and, in 2021, developed a Training Guide which is now institutionalized in national training academies (**Doctrine, Education, and Training**).

INTRODUCTION

Child recruitment remains a pervasive feature of conflicts around the world. In 2024, the United Nations (UN) verified the recruitment and use of 7,402 children by parties to armed conflict in 23 situations of concern.⁴

Children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) act in combat and non-combat roles, with girls particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.⁵ Using children in warfare violates their basic rights and inflicts acute and lasting harm on their physical and mental health, development, and dignity. The recruitment and use of children under 18 in armed conflict violates international human rights law and, when involving children under the age of 15, amounts to a war crime under international humanitarian law (IHL).⁶

Preventing child recruitment requires strong commitments from diverse actors across defense and security sectors, humanitarian and development partners, the United Nations (UN), and governments.⁷ Among these, **peacekeepers** – including troops, police, and civilians – play a critical role on the front lines to monitor, report on, and respond to grave violations against children in armed conflicts.⁸

Recognizing the importance of peacekeepers, Canada launched the **Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers** (hereon referred to as the Vancouver Principles) in 2017.⁹ As of February 2026, 107 countries have endorsed the non-binding political agreement, and many have begun to enact its 17 commitments. This includes developing domestic policies, training troops and police on children’s rights and prevention of recruitment, caring for peacekeepers’ mental health, and supporting UN processes that bolster child protection, such as mission mandates or peace processes.

Member States, through their involvement in peacekeeping, play a critical but under-examined role in preventing child recruitment and protecting children in situations of armed conflict. Addressing this gap, this study compares the efforts of five endorsing, troop- and police- contributing countries (T/PCCs) – **Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay** – to implement the Vancouver Principles.

⁴ United Nations, *Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict 2025, A/79/878-S/2025/247*, para. 7.

⁵ UNICEF, *The Paris Principles. Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated With Armed Forces or Armed Groups*. (2007), para. 2.1.

⁶ See Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for CAAC, *Child Recruitment and Use*. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) defines 18 as the legal age of recruitment and prohibits the use of children in hostilities (Article 1), conscription by state armed forces (Article 2) or enlistment of children without appropriate safeguards (Article 3). All child recruitment and use is also illegal for parties to the Operational Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and the International Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention (No. 182).

⁷ *The Paris Principles*, para. 1.10.

⁸ Falco, V. and Wargo, A. “*Vancouver Principle 6 and the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism: The MRM as a ‘whole-of-mission’ responsibility in UN peacekeeping operations.*” *Allons-y* 2020(4).

⁹ *The Vancouver Principles*.

Watchlist selected these countries on the basis of their meaningful levels of troop or police contribution, geographic diversity across regions, and evidence of engagement with at least one of the Principles.

At a critical moment, marked by severe funding constraints, mission drawdowns, and proposed reforms under the UN80 initiative, child protection capacity within peacekeeping operations is at risk.¹⁰ This study therefore underscores the need for Member States to translate political commitments into concrete action at the UN, regional, and national levels. In line with Vancouver Principle 16 on sharing good practices, this study aims to support further endorsement and more effective implementation by identifying enabling factors and persistent barriers, and by offering targeted recommendations for Member States, the United Nations and regional organizations, and donors and technical partners.

Research Questions

Across the five countries (**Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay**), this study seeks to:

- Analyze policy and doctrine related to child protection and peacekeeping;
- Assess the extent to which military and police are prepared and trained on child protection and prevention of recruitment prior to deployment;

- Examine the extent to which peacekeepers, including civilian personnel, operationalize training, doctrine, and policy to prevent recruitment and use and protect children;
- Identify enabling factors supporting—and barriers that inhibit—implementation of the Vancouver Principles; and
- Document similarities and differences in Vancouver Principles implementation across contexts.

It is not in the scope of this study to:

- Examine in depth the child protection functions of UN or regional peace operations;¹¹
- Quantify the impact of the Vancouver Principles, such as the number of peacekeepers trained or other metrics of prevention;
- Document every example of implementation across all troops, police, and government agencies in the five countries; and
- Consider, in full, the Vancouver Principles in relation to UN80 or mission withdrawals and transitions.

¹⁰ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, [Briefing Note: The Impact of UN80, the Humanitarian Reset, and Funding Cuts on the Children and Armed Conflict \(CAAC\) Agenda](#) (2025); UN News, [Funding crisis forces deep cuts to UN peacekeeping missions](#), October 16, 2025.

¹¹ Forthcoming research by the Stimson Center, Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – all funded by Global Affairs Canada.

The Vancouver Principles

The **Vancouver Principles** are a set of **17 political commitments** endorsed by UN Member States to strengthen the capacity of peacekeepers to **prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict** and to respond appropriately when children are encountered during peace operations. The Principles are summarized here:

1. **Mandates** – Ensure peacekeeping mandates include explicit provisions on child protection and preventing the recruitment and use of children.
2. **Planning** – Integrate child protection considerations, including prevention of recruitment, into mission planning and sector-wide strategy and policy.
3. **Early Warning** – Strengthen early warning systems to identify risks of child recruitment and use.
4. **Child Protection Focal Points** – Designate child protection focal points within military and police contingents.
5. **Doctrine, Education, and Training** – Integrate child protection, including prevention of child recruitment, into doctrine, education, and training.
6. **Monitoring and Reporting** – Ensure peacekeepers are trained to monitor and report on grave violations.
7. **Protection and Care** – Enable peacekeepers to protect children and facilitate access to care.
8. **Prevention** – Take proactive measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children.
9. **Detention** – Treat children encountered in detention primarily as victims and ensure child-sensitive procedures.
10. **Conduct and Discipline** – Uphold the highest standards of conduct and discipline, including zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse.
11. **Contribution of Women** – Promote the meaningful participation of women in peace operations.
12. **DDR** – Support child- and gender- sensitive DDR processes for children associated with armed forces or groups.
13. **Mental Health** – Address the mental health of peacekeepers to support appropriate engagement with children and minimize trauma and stress.
14. **Peace Processes** – Ensure peace processes address the rights and needs of children, including reintegration of children.
15. **Sanctions** – Support the use of sanctions against parties that recruit or use children.
16. **Best Practices** – Share lessons learned and best practices related to child protection in peace operations and the Vancouver Principles.
17. **Further Guidance** – Develop and update guidance.

For more details, see the *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, which includes practical examples and recommendations for Member States.¹²

¹² Government of Canada, [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#).

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach, combining desk research with semi-structured interviews. The **desk review** examined academic literature, UN reports, peacekeeping training materials, and publications by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The review also included available national laws and policies, military or police strategy documents, training curricula, official statements, and news reports.

Watchlist also conducted 30 **semi-structured interviews**, including with UN entities (including the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC)) and representatives of international NGOs (The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security (hereon referred to as the Dallaire Institute), Save the Children, and the CAAFAG Taskforce of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, among others). At the country level, representatives of Ministries of Defense or Foreign Affairs (Italy, Ghana, Senegal, Uruguay) and national or regional training institutions (Ghana, Uruguay) were interviewed or provided written information. Deployed personnel from Italy and Senegal were also interviewed. No government or civil society from Pakistan participated in the study.

This study had several limitations:

- The research focused on State-level actions as opposed to the functions of individual peacekeeping missions. This approach limited the evaluation of operational practice once troops or

police were seconded to missions. However, other research focusing on the Vancouver Principles in mission contexts complement this study.¹³

- All research was conducted remotely, limiting access to deployed personnel or training schools.
- Information was also limited due to 1) restricted access to classified or sensitive military documents and 2) non-participation by some interlocutors due to sensitivities. This contributed to uneven access to information across countries and limited full comparability among case studies.

Defining Vancouver Principles Implementation

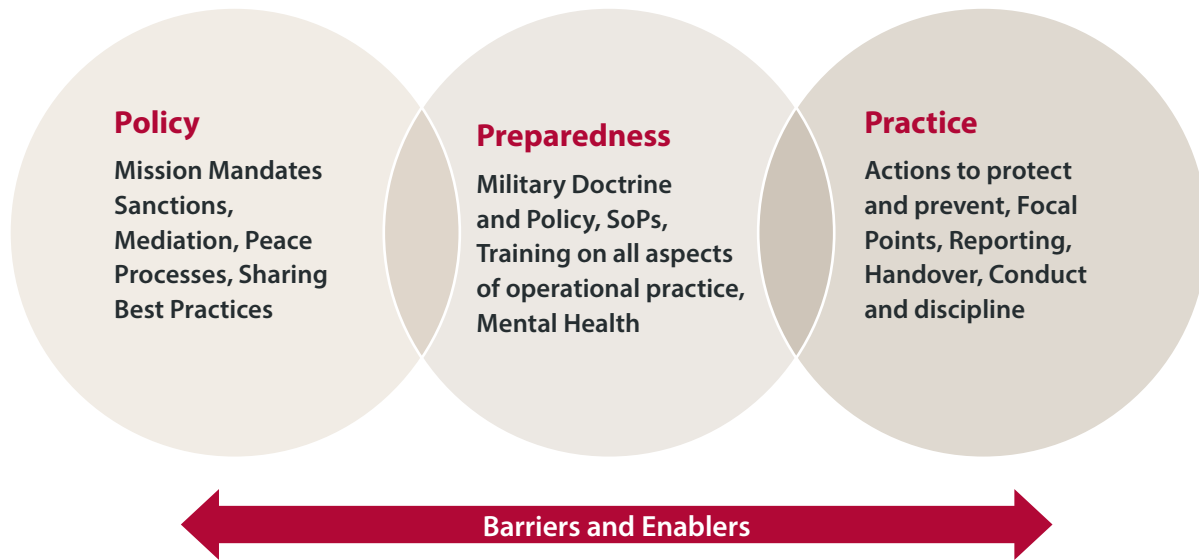
This study defines Vancouver Principles Implementation as all actions to put the Vancouver Principles into practice. This includes by integrating the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers into policies, military and police doctrine, training systems, operational planning, and conduct during peace operations, inclusive of UN peacekeeping missions, regional peacekeeping operations, member-led coalitions, and special political missions.¹⁴

To facilitate analysis, the study considers the Vancouver Principles as occurring within three primary domains – Policy, Preparedness, and Practice – with cross-cutting barriers and enablers. For the purposes of this study, each Vancouver Principle has been analyzed under one of these categories. This approach supports a holistic conceptualization of the commitments as opposed to piecemeal actions.

¹³ Forthcoming research by the Stimson Center, CIVIC, and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

¹⁴ The terms *peace operation*, *peacekeeping operation*, and *peacekeeping mission* are used interchangeably in this study.

Vancouver Principles Implementation Framework



The Vancouver Principles complement existing normative frameworks, laws, and policies and translate them to concrete measures at all stages of the peacekeeping cycle. The Principles build on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), as well the Paris Principles and

Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (hereon referred to as the Paris Principles).¹⁵ They also complement the work of the UN Security Council; at least seven CAAC resolutions have recommended the adoption of “measures for programmatic and policy implementation for recruitment and use.”¹⁶

¹⁵ [The Paris Principles](#).

¹⁶ Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, [Bringing Multilateralism Back Home: Integrating International Legal and Policy Instruments Relevant to the UN's Children and Armed Conflict Agenda into Domestic Law](#), 2025, p.8.

The Vancouver Principles and the CAAC Agenda

The Vancouver Principles complement and strengthen the CAAC agenda and the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for CAAC to protect against and prevent six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict:

- **Killing and maiming of children**
- **Recruitment and use of children**
- **Rape and other forms of sexual violence against children**
- **Abduction of children**
- **Attacks on schools or hospitals**
- **Denial of humanitarian access for children**¹⁷

Central to the CAAC mandate is the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), established through UN Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which collects verified data on the six grave violations. The MRM serves as a core accountability and advocacy tool for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for CAAC, UN bodies, Member States, and civil society.

While emphasizing prevention of recruitment and use of children, many of the Vancouver Principles directly reinforce broader CAAC agenda objectives, including through:

- **Policy and diplomatic action to reinforce CAAC norms**, including through strong mission mandates, sanctions against perpetrators, inclusion of child protection in reintegration and peace processes, and sharing of best practices (Vancouver Principles 1, 12, 14, 15, and 16).
- **Identification and documentation of grave violations against children** through early warning systems, MRM, or other mission mechanisms (Vancouver Principles 3 and 6).
- **Protection and care of children** in coordination with civilian child protection actors (Vancouver Principle 7).
- **Prevention of grave violations** through community engagement and risk mitigation (Vancouver Principle 8).
- **Strengthening child safeguarding in missions**, through codes of conduct and accountability mechanisms to prevent and address misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse (Vancouver Principle 10).
- **Child-sensitive detention and handover practices**, recognizing children as victims (Vancouver Principle 9).

Through their broad support of strong child protection norms and capacities, the Vancouver Principles provide a roadmap for Member States, the UN, and partners to prevent grave violations, to report them consistently, and to protect children throughout the conflict cycle.

¹⁷ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on CAAC, [The Six Grave Violations](#).

Challenges to Researching Vancouver Principles Implementation

Challenges to researching the Vancouver Principles exist, including:

- **The Vancouver Principles have a broad scope**, with 17 distinct commitments linking technical, operational, and political aspects across the peacekeeping cycle. Member States implement different Principles and to varying degrees, depending on their troop or police contributions, engagement in the UN Security Council, or donor status.¹⁸
- **No systematic documentation of implementation exists**, with the exception of the 2019 Implementation Guidance published by Canada that provides implementation examples for each Principle. The Dallaire Institute, a Canadian NGO that co-developed the Vancouver Principles, will reportedly begin piloting an implementation database, although this will focus the organization's own implementation programs.¹⁹
- **Once deployed, troops and police operate under mission directives and protocol.** This limits the ability to track and assess State-led efforts to implement the Vancouver Principles within operational contexts. Aside from conduct and discipline, no standardized indicators or performance metrics existed in UN missions to evaluate peacekeepers in relation to the Vancouver Principles.²⁰

Peacekeeping and the Prevention of Child Recruitment

Child recruitment and use in armed conflict remains widely perpetrated, in particular by non-state armed groups (NSAGs). In 2024, the UN verified the recruitment and use of 7,402 children in 23 of the 25 situations of concern included in the Secretary-General's annual report on CAAC.²¹ Of the 74 parties to armed conflict listed for perpetrating grave violations against children, 66 parties, including three State actors and 63 NSAGs, recruited or used children in 2024. Also in 2024, over 3,000 children were detained, many for alleged association with armed groups.²² The above data does not represent the full scale of violations but provides UN-verified trends in grave violations against children.

Of the 23 situations with verified reports of child recruitment in 2024, 18 had at least one active peace operation or special political mission. Specifically, across the 18 situations of concern, there were 31 peace operations or political missions in 2024, including: four UN peace operations; seven UN special political missions; two Member-led coalitions; and 18 regional peacekeeping operations, primarily led by the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and African Union (AU) (See Chart 1 and Table 1 for more details).²³

¹⁸ Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 16, 2025.

¹⁹ Interview, Dallaire Institute, January 8, 2026.

²⁰ Interview, UN DPO, December 18, 2025.

²¹ United Nations, *Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict 2025, A/79/878-S/2025/247*, para. 7.

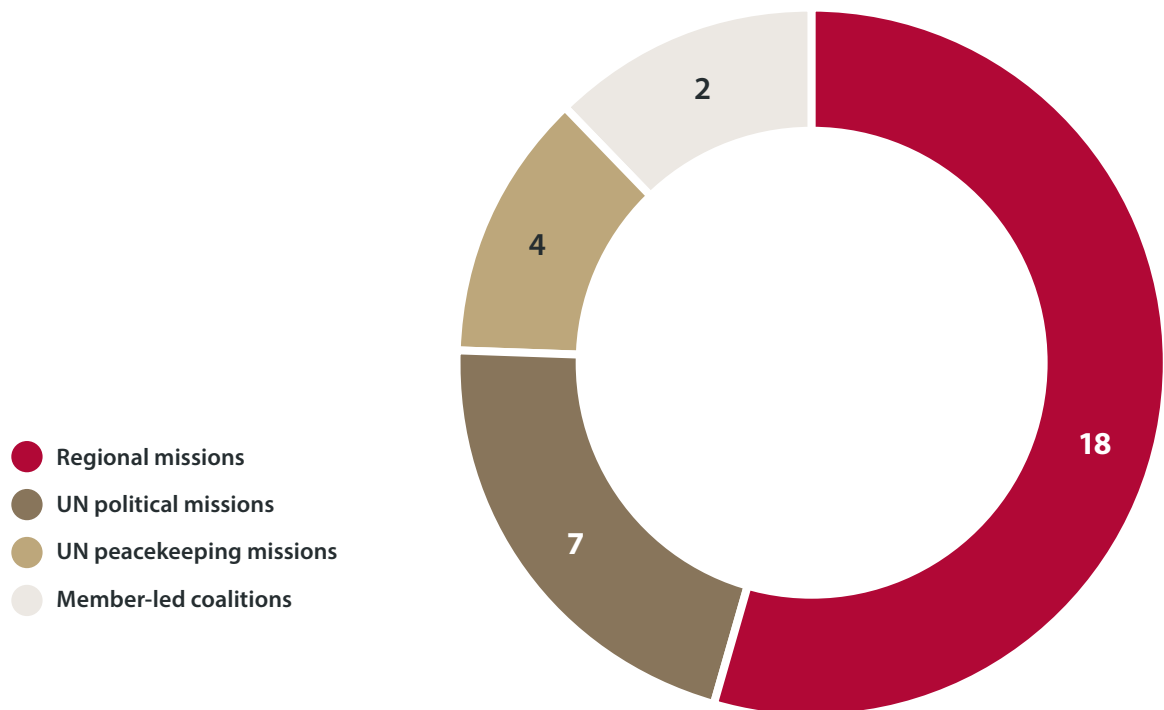
²² *Ibid.*

²³ In 2024, the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#) counted 61 multilateral peace operations in 36 countries or territories. The UN had had 8 special political missions and 11 active peacekeeping missions, the EU had 17 peacekeeping missions, the OSCE had 7, and the African Union had 5. In addition, 8 missions were conducted as member-led alliances.

Of the four UN peacekeeping operations, three had child protection mandates: the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA).

CHART 1.
Peacekeeping and Political Missions in Situations with Verified Recruitment and Use of Children²⁴



²⁴ Data from SIPRI, with the addition of the Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF).

TABLE 1.
Peacekeeping operations in countries with UN-verified reports of child recruitment, 2024²⁵

* Missions closed during or after 2024.

Situation of Concern (2024)	Children recruited and used (2024)	UN Operation	UN Special Political Mission	Regional Operation	Coalition
Afghanistan	11		UNAMA		
Burkina Faso	68				
CAR	331	MINUSCA		EUTM RCA, EUAM RCA	
Chad (Lake Chad Basin)	2				MNJTF
Colombia	450		UNVMC	MAPP/OEA	
DRC	2,365	MONUSCO		SAMIDRC*	
Ethiopia	5			AU-MVCM	
Haiti	302		BINUH		MSS* (now GSF)
Iraq	7		UNAMI*	NMI, EUAM Iraq	
Israel/Palestine	27			EUBAM Rafah, EUPOL COPPS	
Lebanon	76	UNIFIL			
Mali	285			EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUTM Mali*	
Mozambique	403			EUMAM Mozambique, SAMIM*	
Myanmar	482				
Niger	35			EUCAP Sahel Niger*	MNJTF
Nigeria	974				MNJTF
Philippines	7				
Somalia	768		UNSOM*, UNTMIS	EUTM Somalia, ATMIS*	
South Sudan	68	UNMISS		CTSAMVM	
Sudan	25				
Syria	527				
Ukraine	2			EUAM Ukraine	
Yemen	182		UNMHA		

²⁵ Data in this table is from 2024. Data on Recruitment is from the [Secretary-General's 2025 report on Children and Armed Conflict](#). Data on peace operations is from [SIPRI's 2025 Annual Report](#), complemented by further research on mission closures in 2025 and the addition of MNJTF as a coalition (see [here](#) for more details on MNJTF).

Acronyms introduced in Table 1 not listed elsewhere in the report:

ATMIS – AU Transition Mission in Somalia; AU-MVCM – AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission; BINUH – UN Integrated Office in Haiti; CTSAMVM – Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism; EUAM Iraq – EU Advisory Mission in Iraq; EUAM RCA – EU Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic; EUBAM Rafah – EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point; EUCAP Sahel Mali – EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali; EUCAP Sahel Niger – EU Capacity Building Mission in Niger; EUMAM Mozambique – EU Military Assistance Mission in Mozambique; EUPOL COPPS – EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories; EUTM Mali – EU Training Mission in Mali; EUTM RCA – EU Training Mission in the Central African Republic; EUTM Somalia – EU Training Mission in Somalia; GSF – Gang Stabilization Force; MAPP/OEA – Organization of American States Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia; MNJTF – Multinational Joint Task Force; MSS – Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti; NMI – NATO Mission Iraq; SAMIDRC – SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; SAMIM – SADC Mission in Mozambique; UNAMA – UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; UNAMI – UN Assistance Mission in Iraq; UNMHA – UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement; UNSOM – UN Assistance Mission in Somalia; UNTMIS – UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia; UNVMC – UN Verification Mission in Colombia.

Child protection is integrated to varying degrees within the policies of UN and regional bodies. In 2017, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (now DPO), Department of Field Support, and Department of Political Affairs (now Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs) issued a Policy on Child Protection in UN Peace Operations that outlines roles and responsibilities of different mission actors. Similarly, regional bodies have developed their own policies and guidelines, such as the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict,²⁶ the NATO Policy on Children and Armed Conflict,²⁷ and the Child Protection in AU Peace Support Operations Policy.²⁸ Regional policies reflect the principles of the CAAC mandate, including the six grave violations against children.

Although regional arrangements are authorized by the Security Council under Chapter 8 of the UN Charter,²⁹ their mandates, structures, and operational architectures differ from UN peacekeeping missions. Regionally led operations typically deploy fewer personnel³⁰ and, in some cases, adopt more militarized approaches. As noted by the African Center for Strategic Studies, African-led missions have often prioritized military action with limited alignment to civilian institutions or community-based conflict-prevention efforts.³¹

While both UN and regional missions establish directives and protocols for monitoring and reporting, handover procedures, and conduct related to

violations against children, the UN's multidimensional peacekeeping operations generally maintain the most comprehensive and institutionalized child protection and protection of civilians frameworks. These include dedicated mandates, specialized civilian expertise, standardized training, and mission-wide operational structures.³²

Although the Vancouver Principles acknowledge regionally led peacekeeping, their language and accompanying implementation guidance primarily reflect UN peacekeeping architecture. This includes references to the processes of establishing and renewing mission mandates within the UN Security Council, the role of Child Protection Advisors (CPAs), and the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism structure. Yet between 2017, when the Principles launched, and 2025, the number of UN peace operations have declined from 17 to 11.³³ At the same time, member-led operations, such as the Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti, and new regionally-led peace support operations have emerged. Also in recent years, the UN has more frequently authorized special political missions as opposed to peacekeeping operations, in some cases as part of mission transitions.³⁴ This evolving landscape underscores the need to further consider the Vancouver Principles across the full spectrum of peace operations and special political missions.

²⁶ EU, *Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict*, 2024.

²⁷ NATO, *Policy on Children and Armed Conflict*, 2023.

²⁸ AU, *Meetings of the 14th Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security*, 2022.

²⁹ United Nations Charter, *Chapter VIII: Regional Arrangements*, Articles 52-54.

³⁰ See SIPRI, pp. 36-37.

³¹ Allen, N, *African-Led Peace Operations: A Crucial Tool for Peace and Security*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, August, 9, 2025.

³² See for example: CIVIC, *Strengthening Protection of Civilians by AU Peace Support Operations for a New Era of Missions*, 2024.

³³ See SIPRI.

³⁴ Hellmüller S, Tan XR, Bara C. *What is in a Mandate? Introducing the UN Peace Mission Mandates Dataset*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2024, 68(1).

Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay in Peacekeeping

Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay are all signatories to the Vancouver Principles and were among the top 20 T/PCCs in UN peacekeeping in 2025.³⁵ In addition, Ghana and Senegal contributed troops to Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and AU operations while Italy contributed to EU and NATO operations, as well as bilateral military support and capacity building.³⁶

All five countries deployed peacekeepers to countries that experienced child recruitment and use, and all, except Italy, have deployed troops or police to at least one of the three missions with UN child protection mandates as of October 2025: UNMISS, MONUSCO, and MINUSCA. In addition, Italy and Ghana both deploy personnel to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL); although the mission does not have a child protection mandate, the UN verified the recruitment of 76 boys in Lebanon by NSAGs in 2024.³⁷ Italy also deployed significant levels of troops and police through NATO, EU, or bilateral engagements, including Niger, Somalia, and other contexts with recruitment.³⁸

TABLE 2.
UN Peacekeeping Contributions to Selected Missions (October 2025)

	MINUSCA	UNMISS	MONUSCO	UNIFIL	Total UN	Regional Operations
Ghana	15	1027	22	878	2636	ECOWAS, AU
Italy	-	-	-	939	946	NATO, EU, Bilateral
Pakistan	1422	311	327	0	2661	-
Senegal	716	1	395	0	1115	ECOWAS, AU
Uruguay	-	-	629	1	855	-

³⁵ According to UN DPO Data reported in October 2025.

³⁶ Italian Ministry of Defense, *International operations in progress* (as of January 2026).

³⁷ United Nations, *Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict 2025, A/79/878-S/2025/247*.

³⁸ Italian Ministry of Defense, *International operations in progress* (as of January 2026).

POLICY AND DIPLOMACY TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION IN PEACEKEEPING

Vancouver Principles 1, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16

Several Vancouver Principles focus on policy and diplomatic action at national, regional, and international levels, including through engagement with the UN Security Council, the CAAC agenda, and regional peacekeeping frameworks.

Specifically, this section examines implementation of **Principles 1, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16**, which together establish the political and normative conditions for preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict:

Principle 1 Mandates	Appropriate child protection provisions, including the prevention of recruitment and use, in peacekeeping mandates.
Principle 11 Contribution of Women	Policies to promote gender diversity amongst peacekeeping forces.
Principle 12 DDR	Children included as a priority in the planning and execution of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration.
Principle 14 Peace Processes	Including of child protection provisions within the terms of peace processes and post-conflict recovery
Principle 15 Sanctions	Inclusion of recruitment and use as a designation criterion in United Nations sanctions regime.
Principle 16 Best Practices	Sharing best practices and lessons learned with other Member States and the UN.

Ghana, Italy, Senegal, Pakistan, and Uruguay have implemented the above Principles to varying degrees. Compared with Principles related to military doctrine or training materials, Member States make more of this information publicly available, rendering a comparative analysis of these Principles more feasible.

Mandates (Vancouver Principle 1)

To implement this principle, Member States should advocate for the inclusion of child protection tasks, references to CAAC-related resolutions or other statements, and reinforce such recommendations in regional peacekeeping.³⁹

All five countries voted for mandate renewals that preserved child protection:⁴⁰

- In 2016, **Senegal** and **Uruguay** voted to renew the MONUSCO and MINUSCA mandates.⁴¹
- In 2017, **Italy**, **Senegal**, and **Uruguay** voted to renew the MINUSMA mandate.⁴²
- During its term on the council in 2022, **Ghana** voted to extend mission mandates for UNAMA⁴³ and MINUSCA⁴⁴ that preserved child-protection tasks.
- In 2025, **Pakistan** voted to renew the MONUSCO mandate, which includes a strong child protection mandate.⁴⁵

All five countries have taken leadership on the CAAC agenda and the issue of child protection through their work on the Security Council or other UN channels. For example, all five countries co-sponsored Resolution 2764 (2024), on children and armed conflict, highlighting the need for sustainable child protection capacities in UN peace operations and the importance of their smooth, responsible transfer to the Organization's country teams during mission transitions or withdrawals.⁴⁶ **Pakistan** was the only country of the five profiled in this study that explicitly highlighted the Vancouver Principles at the 2025 CAAC Open Debate.⁴⁷ Furthermore, **Ghana, Italy** and **Uruguay** all take part in the CAAC Group of Friends in New York, with Uruguay co-chairing the group in Geneva and Italy co-chairing the group in Vienna and Brussels.⁴⁸

Contributions of Women (Principle 11)

To implement this Principle, Member States should increase women's participation in peacekeeping, including through action plans, improved data and reporting, and gender-strong or mixed units.⁴⁹ All five countries have made efforts to strengthen gender within peacekeeping, driven by the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, UN DPO's Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, and the Elsie Initiative, a project to strengthen women's participation in peacekeeping (in Ghana, Senegal, and Uruguay).

³⁹ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 13.

⁴⁰ Of the five case studies, only **Pakistan** (2025-2026) and **Ghana** (2022-2023) were elected to the Security Council post-November 2017 when the Vancouver Principles were launched, which corresponded to the end of the most recent terms of **Italy** (2017), **Uruguay** (2016-2017), and **Senegal** (2016-2017).

⁴¹ [UN Security Council resolution 2301 \(2016\)](#).

⁴² [UN Security Council resolution 2364 \(2017\)](#).

⁴³ [UN Security Council resolution 2626 \(2022\)](#).

⁴⁴ [UN Security Council resolution 2659 \(2022\)](#).

⁴⁵ [UN Security Council resolution 2808 \(2025\)](#).

⁴⁶ [UN Security Council resolution 2764 \(2024\)](#).

⁴⁷ See [S/PV.9945](#), p. 14.

⁴⁸ Security Council Report, [Children and Armed Conflict: Progression, Regression or Maintenance of the Agenda?](#), June 2025.

⁴⁹ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 59.

All five countries have collected and reported gender-disaggregated data on deployed police and troops. According to DPO data from December 2025, only **Ghana** and **Senegal** had met their gender parity targets within peacekeeping missions.⁵⁰ **Pakistan** was the only country in the study to regularly report on the number of female personnel that participate in peacekeeping training at the Center for International Peace and Stability.⁵¹

Across the five case studies, **Ghana**,⁵² **Senegal**,⁵³ and **Uruguay**⁵⁴ demonstrated the most comprehensive institutionalization of gender through dedicated units or policies within the armed forces. **Ghana** and **Pakistan** have also sent Female Engagement Teams (FETs) to MONUSCO that engaged with women and children.⁵⁵ **Italy's** 2025-2029 National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security references the interministerial engagement by Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs to protect children in armed conflict.⁵⁶

Pakistani Female Engagement Teams in MONUSCO

Since 2019, Pakistan has deployed FETs of around 15-20 women to MONUSCO. The FETs have undertaken a range of roles, including long-range patrolling and community outreach.⁵⁷ The first FET received a UN Medal for its service in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which included supporting women and children during patrols, strengthening women's engagement at the grassroots level, providing psychosocial support to women affected by conflict-related violence, delivering awareness-raising sessions on health and protection from violence against women and children, and facilitating access to medical care for children.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ [The Elsie Initiative Fund, Dashboard 3](#) (accessed February 2026).

⁵¹ National University of Sciences and Technology, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, [Peace Operation Training](#)

⁵² MONUSCO, [GHANBATT Female Engagement Team boosts image of Ghana in UN Operations in DRC](#), January 22, 2019.

⁵³ Interview, Gender Division, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 4, 2025; Senegal Ministry of Defense, [DivGenre](#).

⁵⁴ Elsie Initiative, [Uruguay Armed Forces](#), Information received from Permanent Mission of Uruguay, February 4, 2026.

⁵⁵ Talat, Y, [Empowering Women and Children: Pakistan Army Female Engagement Team's Vital Role in UN Peacekeeping](#), NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability, 2024 7(1); MONUSCO, [GHANBATT FET](#).

⁵⁶ Italy Interministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU), [Fifth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security \(2025-2029\)](#). Information received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, February 3, 2026.

⁵⁷ Talat, Y, [Empowering Women and Children](#).

⁵⁸ UN DPO, [The first-ever female Pakistani UN peacekeeping team receives UN medals](#), January 4, 2020.

Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (Vancouver Principle 12)

To implement this Principle, Member States are encouraged to advocate for the inclusion of children in all UN-supported disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs and activities, fund reintegration activities for children, and educate peacekeepers on aspects of DDR.⁵⁹

This study did not find significant evidence of implementation of this Principle. In Ghana, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC) offers a course on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), which includes a module on cross-cutting themes; however, this study could not verify whether child protection is explicitly addressed.⁶⁰

Peace Processes (Vancouver Principles 14)

To implement this Principle, Member States should support the inclusion of child protection provisions within the terms of peace processes, peace agreements, and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts, including by training mediators, advocating for the meaningful participation of

children in peace processes, and advocating for the inclusion of child protection provisions in the cessation of hostilities and ceasefires.⁶¹

Some of the countries in this study supported integrating child protection into peace processes and mediation:

- In November 2020, **Italy** launched the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC) assembling over 40 institutions globally, including from Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. One of UNETCHAC's core initiatives is to build capacity to integrate child protection into peace processes, including training conflict-affected youth on mediation.
- **Uruguay**, through the Dallaire Regional Center of Excellence, has supported the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to train officials on child protection and prevention of recruitment and use.⁶²

This study's scope and focus did not permit an in-depth analysis on peace processes. However, evidence of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia's routine engagement in activities to prevent the recruitment and use of children suggests that implementation of this Principle through special political missions may be promising area of future research and advocacy.⁶³

⁵⁹ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), pp. 60-62.

⁶⁰ KA IPTC, [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Online Course \(DDR\)](#).

⁶¹ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 69.

⁶² Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 12, 2025.

⁶³ Gregory, J, Yousef, E, [Verifying Peace, Promoting Protection: The Experience of Colombia's UN Verification Mission](#), Stimson Center, October 21, 2025.

Sanctions (Vancouver Principle 15)

To implement this Principle, Member States should advocate for including recruitment and use as a designation criterion in UN sanctions resolutions and support actions of the UN Sanctions group of experts. Sanctions regimes are a key tool to hold perpetrators to account and to prevent child recruitment and use.

All five countries have voted to renew sanctions regimes that include reference to recruitment and use of children:

- **Ghana, Senegal, Uruguay, and Italy**, in their capacities as members of the UN Security Council, have established or renewed sanctions regimes concerning the DRC that included references to the recruitment and use of children. The Sanctions Committee later imposed measures on three individuals and one NSAG from the DRC for violations related to the recruitment and use of children.⁶⁴
- **Italy** reported that its work led to the Council adding a separate listing criterion for the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict when renewing the Central African Republic sanctions regime in 2017.⁶⁵
- **Ghana** voted for a resolution to establish sanctions on the Houthis, in Yemen, that referenced recruitment and use of children in 2022; **Pakistan** renewed these in 2025.⁶⁶

These efforts to prevent violations against children, including recruitment and use, are important to the overall goals of the Vancouver Principles and are one of the strongest tools for accountability within the commitments.

Best Practices (Vancouver Principle 16)

To implement this Principle, Member States are encouraged to gather and disseminate best practices and lessons learned and review and update policies and doctrine related to the prevention of recruitment and use of children based on these lessons learned.

There was little evidence of the five countries collecting and sharing best practices and lessons learned from the implementation of the Vancouver Principles. In fact, few of the implementation examples published in this report were shared explicitly as an example of Vancouver Principles implementation; rather, Watchlist collected most examples and analyzed them against the Principles. For instance, in one of the strongest examples of implementation in this study – Uruguay’s 2020 Policy on Child Protection in Peace Operations – the Vancouver Principles are absent from the text or communications surrounding its launch.

The limited sharing of best practices was likely linked to a) a lack of formal reporting channels on the implementation of the Vancouver Principles and b) low levels of awareness about the Principles, particularly outside of activities led by international organizations or donors.⁶⁷ Only **Ghana** and **Uruguay** had published reports on their armed forces’ websites detailing recent trainings or activities which mentioned the Vancouver Principles. Both countries’ armed forces have Memoranda of Understanding with the Dallaire Institute, which potentially raised awareness of sharing good practices and highlighting of the Principles.

⁶⁴ Measures were imposed on the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and leaders of the Twirwaneho, ADF, and *Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo* (CNPSC) armed groups. Details from [List of updates to the UNSC Consolidated List](#) and [Security Council resolution 1807 \(2008\)](#), [Security Council resolution 2294 \(2016\)](#), and [Security Council resolution 2688 \(2023\)](#).

⁶⁵ Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN, [Statement](#), Open Debate on CAAC, October 31, 2017.

⁶⁶ Ghana voted for [Security Council resolution 2624 \(2022\)](#) and Pakistan voted for [Security Council resolution 2801 \(2025\)](#).

⁶⁷ Interview, Save the Children, December 4, 2025; Interview, Key Informant, December 15, 2025.

TABLE 3.
Vancouver Principles in Policy and Diplomacy

	Support for Mission Mandates (1)	DPO Gender Parity Targets Met (11)	Child-Sensitive DDR (12)	Support Child Protection in Peace Processes (14)	Support for Sanctions Regimes (15)	Shared Good Practices (16)
Ghana	●	●			●	●
Italy	●			●	●	
Pakistan	●				●	
Senegal	●	●			●	
Uruguay	●			●	●	●

Conclusions on Implementing Vancouver Principles 1, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16

This research finds that all five countries advanced child protection through policy and diplomatic channels, particularly by supporting the inclusion of child protection provisions in peacekeeping mandates (Vancouver Principle 1) and accountability measures through sanctions regimes addressing the recruitment and use of children (Vancouver Principle 15).

This is promising in the context of the UN80 initiative, funding shortfalls, and mission transitions, since sustained Member State advocacy within the UN Security Council and other UN bodies will be critical to ensuring that child protection remains a core priority. All Member States, regardless of their level of troop or police contributions to peacekeeping, should therefore continue to prioritize their diplomatic engagement on the Vancouver Principles.

However, as peace operations are increasingly conducted through regional frameworks, these efforts must extend beyond the UN. Member States should also promote the application of the Vancouver

Principles within regional organizations, including the European Union, African Union, ECOWAS, and NATO, to ensure coherence across peacekeeping and peace support operations.

The study further underscores the importance of sharing best practices (Vancouver Principle 16) to support learning and consistency among endorsing Member States. Organizations supporting the Vancouver Principles could support Member States to identify, document, and disseminate good practices, thereby raising awareness and encouraging more systematic implementation by Member States.

Finally, while all five countries have taken steps to increase women's participation in peacekeeping in line with Vancouver Principle 11, limited evidence existed linking these initiatives directly to the prevention of child recruitment or the protection of children. Further reflection and analysis are needed to better understand how gender-responsive policies and the meaningful participation of women can contribute more explicitly to preventing and responding to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Johnson, D, *A Critical Feminist Approach to Implementing Vancouver Principle 11*. *Allons-y Journal on Children, Peace, and Security*, 2021(5).

PREPAREDNESS TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN PEACEKEEPING

Lessons from Vancouver Principles 2, 5, and 13

This section examines how Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay prepare troops and police to prevent and respond to the recruitment and use of children, focusing on planning (Principle 2), training and education (Principle 5), and mental health (Principle 13). Overall, the study finds uneven preparedness across the five countries, with significant investment in training but limited institutionalization through doctrine, planning, and deployment systems.

Planning (Vancouver Principle 2)

Vancouver Principle 2 calls on Member States to embed child protection and the prevention of recruitment and use within national policy, doctrine, and directives, as well as in mission planning.⁶⁹

Across the five case studies, the absence of formal military doctrine or planning guidance on recruitment and use or child protection constituted a major gap.

Uruguay and Senegal stand out as exceptions. **Uruguay** adopted a **Policy on Child Protection in Peace Operations** in 2020, supported by an instructor training guide integrated into its national peacekeeping training center. **Senegal** institutionalized child protection through its Armed Forces Gender Division, which incorporates child protection into strategic planning and annual action plans, including training of trainers for officers and senior non-commissioned officers.⁷⁰ The Gender Division’s 2026 Action Plan also calls for better coordination between IHL, Gender, and Child Protection focal points and participation in international trainings on those topics and peacekeeping.⁷¹ However, based on evidence at the time of writing, child protection was not explicitly embedded in military doctrine.

<p>Principle 2 Planning</p>	<p>National strategic policy, doctrine, and directives to institutionalize child protection and the prevention of child recruitment within police and armed forces.</p>
<p>Principle 5 Doctrine, Education, Training</p>	<p>Ensuring quality pre-deployment training and guidance on child protection interactions with CAAFAG</p>
<p>Principle 13 Mental Health</p>	<p>Providing appropriate mental health support pre-, during, and post-deployment and supporting research</p>

⁶⁹ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 13.

⁷⁰ Senegalese Armed Forces, Gender Division Annual Action Plan 2026, On file.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

In **Ghana**, the Dallaire Institute noted that discussions were underway with the Ghanaian Armed Forces to integrate child protection and the prevention of recruitment and use into military doctrine, however this had not yet been finalized as of January 2026.⁷²

In **Italy**, the NATO Policy on Children and Armed Conflicts constituted the primary reference for planning, as opposed to a national doctrine.⁷³

However, at the time of writing, the Ministry of Defense was integrating child protection into trainings for gender advisors which included references to the Vancouver Principles and UN policies.⁷⁴

No comparable planning or policy frameworks were identified for Pakistan.

A Global First: Uruguay's Child Protection in Peace Operations Policy

In February 2020, Uruguay launched its Child Protection in Peace Operations Policy. In 2021, the Minister of Defense affirmed that this was a "state policy" which was the product of long-term efforts.⁷⁵

This policy is oriented around the following key objectives:

- **Train** peacekeeping mission personnel in child protection, before and during deployment.
- **Prevent** situations of violence against children and adolescents.
- **Detect** situations of violation of the rights of children and adolescents.
- **Protect** the rights of victims.
- **Report** any conduct or procedures that could affect compliance with the policy.
- **Investigate** acts of misconduct committed by members of the peacekeeping contingent.⁷⁶

The Policy was developed in cooperation with UNICEF and Keeping Children Safe, a British NGO. This policy is further strengthened by a training guide for instructors on child protection in the context of peacekeeping missions published in 2021.⁷⁷ This guide has reportedly been integrated into instruction within Uruguay's national peacekeeping training center (ENOPU)⁷⁸ as well as across national training schools.⁷⁹

⁷² Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 12, 2025.

⁷³ Information received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, February 3, 2026.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Uruguay Ministry of Defense, [News Release](#), September 15, 2021.

⁷⁶ Uruguay Ministry of Defense, [Child protection policy for personnel deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions](#), 2020.

⁷⁷ Uruguay Ministry of Defense, [News Release](#), August 16, 2021.

⁷⁸ Uruguay Ministry of Defense, [News Release](#), September 15, 2021; Interview, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the UN, February 4, 2026.

⁷⁹ Interview, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the UN, February 4, 2026.

Principle 5: Doctrine, Education, Training

To implement Vancouver Principle 5, Member States should institutionalize child protection and prevention of recruitment and use through national policy, doctrine, and directives, and integrate comprehensive, gender-responsive training on preventing the recruitment and use of children throughout police and military personnel's careers. This relates to basic and in-service training, as they build a foundation and institutional culture which benefit peacekeeping.⁸⁰

Basic and In-Service Training

Child protection was rarely embedded in initial military or police training in the five countries, limiting early professional socialization on the issue. For example, in **Italy**, the provisions of the CRC and OPAC did not appear in military academies' curricula or in the training of active-service military personnel, according to an Italian civil society organization.⁸¹ However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation reported that child protection was integrated into broader military and police training frameworks, reflecting Italy's international and human rights commitments.⁸²

In **Ghana**, the Dallaire Institute was collaborating with the Armed Forces to embed prevention of child recruitment into national training programs.⁸³

In **Senegal**, multiple personnel described the armed forces running "awareness raising sessions" for recruits in initial training, whereas specialized training on children's rights and IHL was more common at senior levels.⁸⁴ Save the Children previously reported that Senegalese Armed Forces had adapted an ECOWAS toolkit and developed manuals on child protection for military academies and training centers.⁸⁵ However, the study did not find evidence of these manuals in use. One of the lead trainers on Child Protection within the Senegalese Armed Forces expressed strong understanding of the CAAC agenda, including multiple UN Security Council resolutions, but was not familiar with the Vancouver Principles.⁸⁶

In Uruguay, child protection is not included in initial military training. However, because a high proportion of personnel deploy to peacekeeping missions over the course of their careers, the armed forces can introduce and reinforce child protection training for a large share of soldiers. Deployment to peacekeeping missions is competitive rather than mandatory and includes financial incentives, which further encourages engagement with core training areas, including child protection.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Interview, Key Informant, November 25, 2025; Interviews, Dallaire Institute, December 10 and 12, 2025.

⁸¹ Grupo CRC, [Implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict](#), August 2023.

⁸² Information received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, February 3, 2026.

⁸³ Interviews, Dallaire Institute, December 10 and 12, 2025.

⁸⁴ Interview, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 13, 2025.

⁸⁵ Save the Children, [Protecting Children in Conflict: Images and Sounds from the ICPAPSA Programme \(2017-2019\)](#), p. 44.

⁸⁶ Interview, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 13, 2025.

⁸⁷ Interview, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the UN, February 4, 2026.

Strengthening Core Competencies on CAAFAG within Senegalese Armed Forces

The Senegalese Armed Forces, through its Gender Division, runs an annual five-day Training of Trainers on Child Protection. They use a module adapted from the **AU Child Protection Facilitation Guide** which was developed in partnership with Save the Children and International Bureau of Children's Rights.

Explicit Linkages to CAAFAG are included in Competencies 1, 3, and 4:

- Under **Competency 1 (Knowledge and Application of Children's Rights in Armed Conflicts)**, personnel are required to understand child recruitment as a child protection violation, including familiarity with CAAFAG and related **disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDR)** processes.
- **Competency 3 (Interaction and Communication with Children, Families, and Communities)** further operationalizes this knowledge by requiring personnel to recognize a child's status—particularly when a child is associated with armed forces or groups—and to apply communication strategies adapted to the child's situation, including in cases where children encounter justice or security actors.
- Procedures for **safe referral and handover** are addressed under **Competency 4 (Coordination and Collaboration with Protection Actors)**, which emphasizes knowledge of referral systems, case management, and coordination with civilian child protection actors.

In-Service Training

Organizations such as the International Bureau of Children's Rights, the Dallaire Institute, and Save the Children have invested significantly in in-service training and Training of Trainers (ToT) of military and police personnel.⁸⁸ Currently, **Senegal** and **Uruguay** have institutionalized ToT courses through their armed forces and peacekeeping schools.⁸⁹ In Uruguay, the ToT enabled trainers to lead additional trainings

in units across the country.⁹⁰ **Ghana Armed Forces** launched its first ToT on preventing recruitment and use in 2024.⁹¹ **The Senegalese police academy** held in-service training on human rights and child protection in 2025, though no evidence of longer-term initiatives were identified.⁹²

Although significant investment in in-service trainings has been made, the study did not identify evidence of the impacts of these trainings, nor initiatives

⁸⁸ Save the Children has been training African militaries on child protection since as early as 1998, see: Save the Children Sweden, [Behind the Uniform: Training the military in child rights and child protection in Africa](#), p. 1.

⁸⁹ Interview, Gender Division, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 4, 2025. National School of Peace Operations of Uruguay, [Annual Program Annual Program 2025](#).

⁹⁰ Interview, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the UN, February 4, 2026.

⁹¹ Woode, K, [APOTS Rounds Up Maiden Child Protection Training of Trainers Course](#), *Ghana Peace Journal*, 2024.

⁹² Senegal National Human Rights Commission, [Third day: Child protection at the heart of training of trainers of the police](#), October 15, 2025.

to measure long-term effects on peacekeeping.⁹³ Save the Children reported that African peacekeeping training centers made few efforts to measure attitude and behavior change due to child protection trainings, largely due to gaps in funding for monitoring.⁹⁴

One challenge to measuring the impact of these trainings is that personnel trained in child protection are not systematically prioritized for deployment, reducing the operational value of specialized training. For those who receive training and are deployed, not all take on child protection functions.⁹⁵ For instance, two personnel in the Senegalese Armed Forces interviewed in this study underwent the child protection training course but had no plans for future deployments. Also within the Senegalese Armed Forces, personnel expressed that training in child protection was not an essential criterion for deployment.⁹⁶ As one personnel from the Senegalese Armed Forces Gender Division explained:

Your assignment [in a mission] does not depend on whether you have done a training in child protection or international law. Specialties like infantry, cavalry, or armored vehicles, these are specialties for which you can be assigned to a particular unit, but training as a focal point, for example, or training in child protection is not a necessary or a specific basis for assignment.⁹⁷

Pre-deployment training

Countries are responsible for pre-deployment training for peacekeepers. To facilitate this, the UN DPO developed Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTM) **in use by all countries in this study**. Child protection is one of 34 lessons in the CPTM, included in the section on Protection Mandates.⁹⁸

The **Senegalese Armed Forces** conduct approximately three months of pre-deployment trainings for peacekeepers at a tactical training center, during which only a few hours are dedicated to child protection.⁹⁹ Personnel who had recently undergone training ahead of deployment to MINUSCA mentioned that the training covered the CAR context and background on the mission but were not familiar with the child protection functions of the mission, such as the MRM.¹⁰⁰

In **Pakistan**, the Centre for International Peace and Stability in Islamabad delivers several UN Pre-Deployment Trainings annually for Pakistan Army personnel. Course summaries stated that child protection is one of the “critical themes and priorities”.¹⁰¹

In the case of **Italy**, all troops deployed to NATO or UN missions received child protection training based on the policies and requirements of those bodies. Based on publicly available information on trainings, as well as interviews with a deployed peacekeeper

⁹³ The Dallaire Institute has found positive impacts of their own interventions but these do not include countries in the study, reported in: [Security Sector Training on Prevention of Recruitment](#).

⁹⁴ Save the Children, [Shaping Knowledge and Attitude towards Child Protection Capacity Building in Peace Support Operations](#), 2019, p.iiv.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.17.

⁹⁶ Interview, December 10, 2025.

⁹⁷ Interview, December 4, 2025.

⁹⁸ UN DPO, [Guidance on Use of the CPTM](#), pp. 9-10.

⁹⁹ Interviews, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 11, 2025, and January 9, 2026. Training plan documents on file.

¹⁰⁰ Interviews, Senegalese Armed Forces and Police, December 2025, and January 9, 2026.

¹⁰¹ National University of Science and Technology, [UN Courses](#).

and information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, trainings had a strong focus on law and IHL.¹⁰²

In **Ghana**, child protection is integrated into the pre-deployment training and covers 5-9 hours of classroom and scenario-based instruction, often integrated with training on Protection of Civilians and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. During pre-deployment certification, troops are assessed on final training exercises which include child protection scenarios.¹⁰³

In-Mission Training

In-mission training makes up an important aspect of child protection preparation. Once deployed in mission, troops or police will receive brief training which, in most contexts, will include briefing on the child protection responsibilities and structures.¹⁰⁴ **Senegalese** peacekeepers in MINUSCA also reported that, during deployment, they had a workplan that included trainings on child protection.¹⁰⁵

Mission staff also did ongoing trainings based on needs and situations on the ground. However, specialists have pointed to the high turnover of personnel, with some troops or police only deployed for six months at a time, making it difficult and resource intensive to address all personnel.¹⁰⁶ UN DPO staff also noted that in-country training, particularly for Child Protection Focal Points (CPFP), was essential and made the on-the-job learning more efficient.¹⁰⁷

The **Ghanaian** KAIPTC also delivered in-mission training on Protection of Civilians, including child protection, to two ECOWAS missions in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau during 2025. One trainer explained that delivering in-mission was more effective and helped to tailor the sessions to needs and better move from theory to action.¹⁰⁸

Specialized and International Trainings

Specialized trainings on child protection typically occurred in international training centers, either provided by UN DPO or through international training centers. UN DPO organized annual trainings for in-mission staff, national trainers, and, in some cases, soon-to-be deployed child protection advisers.¹⁰⁹

In addition, some of the countries in this study — namely **Ghana, Italy, Senegal, and Uruguay** — also trained foreign armed forces or police through international peacekeeping training centers or memoranda of understanding that enabled training in national peacekeeping schools. These trainings were generally funded through external sources:

- **Italy's** international training center for police, CoESPU, helped to develop and pilot the Child Protection for UN Police intensive course and has trained formed police and gendarmerie from several PCCs.¹¹⁰ In addition, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law and UNETCHAC

¹⁰² For example, *Legal Advisor in the Armed Forces*. Interview, Italian Armed Forces, December 10, 2025. Information received from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, February 3, 2026.

¹⁰³ Information received from Permanent Mission of Ghana to the UN, January 27, 2026.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, UN DPO, December 18, 2025. Interview, Key Informant, November 25, 2025.

¹⁰⁵ Interviews, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 11 and 17, 2026 and January 9, 2026,

¹⁰⁶ Interview, UN DPO, December 18, 2025.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Interview, KAIPTC, November 26, 2025.

¹⁰⁹ Interview, UN DPO, December 18, 2025.

¹¹⁰ See *CoESPU*.

have organized a training on IHL and CAAC in 2025, with a view to develop further trainings for military personnel.¹¹¹

- **Uruguay's** national peacekeeping training school has signed on as a Center of Excellence with Dallaire Institute and routinely trains troops and police across the region; for instance, it

recently ran a training on the prevention of recruitment and use for Guatemalan troops ahead of deployment to Haiti as part of the Gang Stabilization Force.¹¹² Uruguay has also run similar trainings in Colombia,¹¹³ including with the army, air force, navy, police, peacekeeping centers, and the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare.¹¹⁴

Lessons learned from KAIPTC (Ghana)

KAIPTC provides training for civilian and uniformed personnel, largely within the ECOWAS context. Child protection is not a stand-alone course but is covered within broader modules (e.g., Protection of Civilians), including basic child protection principles, referral to Child Protection Advisors, conduct and discipline, and child-sensitive engagement.

KAIPTC and its technical partner, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), identified a few persistent barriers:

1. **Developing and delivering new courses relies on sustained donor funding.** This funding gap has limited the development of a dedicated child protection course.
2. **Cost-recovery pricing can exclude many participants.** The funding model also prioritizes fundings at the training center in Ghana, as opposed to in-mission where valuable teaching with active peacekeepers can take place.
3. **Training does not reliably translate into deployment.** As one staff explained, "We train people, they put them on the roster. But the is that many of the times the people that who are put on roster are actually never deployed."¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Information received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, February 3, 2026.

¹¹² Uruguayan Armed Forces, Basic Course for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children and Adolescents in Armed Conflicts.

¹¹³ Statement of Uruguay at the 2025 CAAC Open Debate.

¹¹⁴ Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 12, 2025.

¹¹⁵ Interview, GIZ, November 26, 2025.

Mental health (Vancouver Principle 13)

To implement Principle 13, Member States should support research on trauma resulting from encounters with CAAFAG and children affected by armed conflict and provide mental health support pre-, during, and post-deployment.¹¹⁶ Mental health support is a critical but underexamined component of preparedness.

The study found that both **Senegal** and **Italy** provide routine mental health support to peacekeepers at all stages of the peacekeeping cycle, including during their deployments:

- **Ghana Armed Forces** battalions deploy with a military psychologist and rely on structured peer-support mechanisms. Post-deployment mental health support and debriefings, including support related to post-traumatic stress, are also provided upon return to home units.¹¹⁷
- Within the **Italian Armed Forces**, military psychologists support personnel and families at the pre- and post-deployment phases and are embedded in missions, delivering support and providing advice to commanders.¹¹⁸ One Italian peacekeeper reported that psychologists were present for pre-deployment role play

activities about interacting with children, in order to support “managing trauma or stress” and guiding them towards appropriate behaviors with children.¹¹⁹

- In **Senegal**, the Armed Forces Psychological Support Program assesses the mental state of personnel to be deployed and teaches stress management.¹²⁰ Troops and their families receive pre-deployment assessment and coaching and pre- and post-deployment psychological care.¹²¹ One Senegalese peacekeeper in MINUSCA also reported that they had in-mission psychosocial support.¹²²

In **Uruguay**, as part of measures to support gender equality, mental health support was available to female peacekeepers, however gaps remained in extending services to their male counterparts.¹²³ The study was unable to determine the extent to which mental health is either studied or integrated within peacekeeping cycles in Pakistan. However, beyond the Vancouver Principles, Member States commit to provide comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support for peacekeepers through UN Security Council resolution 2668 (2022),¹²⁴ which **Italy** co-sponsored and for which **Ghana** voted.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 65.

¹¹⁷ Information received from the Ghanaian Permanent Mission to the UN, January 27, 2026.

¹¹⁸ Lo Castro, I., and Livi, S. (2017). [Military Psychology Practice in Italy: From Grass Roots to Recent Applications](#), *Handbook of Military Psychology*.

¹¹⁹ Interview, Key Informant, December 10, 2017.

¹²⁰ Senegal Ministry of Defence, “Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations Study (MOWIP),” 2024.

¹²¹ Augé, A, [Psychosocial support for families and the mental health of peacekeepers in the field](#), Boutros-Ghali Peacekeeping Observatory, October 2025.

¹²² Interview, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 11, 2025.

¹²³ Interview, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the UN, February 4, 2026.

¹²⁴ [UN Security Council Resolution 2668 \(2022\)](#).

¹²⁵ [Draft resolution S/2022/977](#).

TABLE 4.
Vancouver Principles in Troop and Police Preparedness

	Child Protection in Strategy (2)	Child Protection in National Policy (2)	Training on Recruitment Prevention (5)	CP in Pre-Deployment Training (5)	Mental Health Support (13)
Ghana			●	●	●
Italy				●	●
Pakistan				●	
Senegal	●			●	●
Uruguay		●		●	

Conclusions on Implementing Vancouver Principles 2, 5, and 13

Across the five countries, preparedness to prevent and respond to child recruitment and use is driven primarily by training initiatives rather than institutional planning. While in-service and pre-deployment training under Vancouver Principle 5 are relatively well developed, the countries included in this study have not integrated child protection, children’s rights, or the prevention of recruitment in system-wide basic training. Given the gaps in deploying personnel with

specialized training, Member States should take steps to ensure all personnel have baseline understanding of child protection.

Stronger integration of child protection into national planning (Principle 2) will support a more fully developed training regimen on prevention and child protection. Finally, the examples from Senegal and Italy on expanded attention to mental health (Principle 13) should encourage other countries to take similar steps; these are inherently beneficial to peacekeepers and to their ability to protect children once deployed.

OPERATIONAL PRACTICE IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

Lessons from Vancouver Principles 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10

Several Vancouver Principles focus on how peacekeepers identify risks, respond to violations, and engage with children in situations of armed conflict. Principles 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 translate political commitments and preparedness into operational practice by military, police, and civilian personnel in mission settings.

Mission Structure as an Enabler and Constraint

Assessing the operational implementation by countries is inherently challenging. In operational settings, State policies and preparedness measures intersect with mission mandates, directives, and standard operating procedures (SOPs). As a result, implementation at this level depends not only on national training and intent, but also on mission structure, leadership, and resources.

Principle 3 Early Warning	Support efforts to monitor, report, identify, and address early warning signs of the recruitment and use.
Principle 4 Child Protection Focal Points	Appoint and empower child protection focal points throughout mission command structures.
Principle 6 Monitoring and Reporting	Report incidents of grave violations against, including the recruitment and use of children, through the appropriate channels.
Principle 7 Protection and Care	Protect all children encountered during operations and facilitate access to services.
Principle 8 Prevention	Proactive operational measures to reduce the risk of child recruitment and use.
Principle 9 Detention	Implement child-sensitive procedures in detention contexts, recognizing children as victims.
Principle 10 Conduct and Discipline	Hold personnel to the highest standard of conduct, and to investigate and prosecute, where appropriate and in accordance with applicable national law.

Vancouver Principles 6, 7, 8, and 9 explicitly situate peacekeepers' responsibilities within mission mandates and directives. For example, Principle 7 on Protection and Care emphasizes actions "where authorized by the mission mandate and rules of engagement," while Principle 6 on Monitoring and Reporting refers to "appropriate channels established in peacekeeping operations."¹²⁶

Thus, actions to protect children are shaped by mission mandates, child protection capacity, and Force Commander or Police Commissioner Directives. Several experts noted that even well-trained personnel may be constrained by mission SOPs that are outdated, unclear, or inconsistently implemented. For example, one specialist described a case in which peacekeepers were instructed by mission leadership to photograph victims of sexual violence and email the images, despite having been trained that this violated protection standards.¹²⁷

Another expert explained that regardless of the level of training:

When peacekeepers arrive in the operational environment, the first wall is the mission SOPs. We can train them in child safeguarding and prevention of recruitment, but when they encounter a child involved in conflict, the only thing they can do is follow the SOP.¹²⁸

As such, the expert emphasized the importance of changing behavior so that, regardless of mission SOPs, personnel would have the foundations for how

to treat and interact with children. This highlights the importance of **aligning mission-level directives with child protection standards** and ensuring that operational leadership is well-versed in this.

Measuring the Impact of Trainings on Operational Practice

Across interviews, experts from Save the Children, the Dallaire Institute, and training centers emphasized the lack of systematic evidence on how training translates into improved outcomes for children. While significant resources have been invested in training peacekeepers, few mechanisms exist to assess impact beyond immediate knowledge acquisition. As one Dallaire Institute staff member noted:

The end beneficiary of training is the child. We need to ask whether children are actually better protected as a result of trained troops — whether they know how to prevent recruitment, care for children, and hand them over safely.¹²⁹

Some initiatives are beginning to address this gap. The Dallaire Institute is currently piloting longer-term monitoring of trained peacekeepers in Ghana,¹³⁰ while KAIPTC has conducted follow-up evaluations of training outcomes after six months and three years, though not specifically focused on child protection.¹³¹ Overall, measuring operational impact to prevent recruitment and protect children remains a significant gap in implementation.

¹²⁶ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), pp. 37, 41.

¹²⁷ Interview, Key Informant, November 25, 2025.

¹²⁸ Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 12, 2025.

¹²⁹ Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 5, 2026.

¹³⁰ Interview, Dallaire Institute, January 8, 2026.

¹³¹ Interviews, KAIPTC, November 25, and December 10, 2025.

However, peacekeepers from both **Senegal** and **Italy** noted that overall military culture and training led to a strong fundamental knowledge of IHL respect for civilians.¹³² As a result, these peacekeepers believed that their contingents were well-received in the communities where they deployed. While more difficult to measure, these types of behavioral norms can support the operational practices detailed below.¹³³

Early Warning (Vancouver Principle 3)

Vancouver Principle 3 calls on Member States to support UN efforts to identify, collect, and report on early warning indicators related to the recruitment and use of children.¹³⁴ While the UN Policy on Child Protection in Peace Operations identifies early warning as a mission-level activity that should integrate child protection,¹³⁵ this study did not identify examples of individual countries systematically tracking child-specific indicators within their contingents. Instead, early warning efforts were more commonly situated at the mission level. For example, in MINUSCA, child-related indicators were reportedly being piloted, although Senegalese peacekeepers interviewed for this study were not aware of these.¹³⁶ At the regional level, AU and Intergovernmental Authority on Development early warning systems

reportedly included indicators such as school absenteeism, which may signal heightened risks of recruitment.¹³⁷

In **Ghana**, the Dallaire Institute has worked with the National Peace Council to integrate child-related early warning into existing national mechanisms, underscoring the relevance of early warning beyond peacekeeping contexts, particularly in border areas affected by spillover violence.¹³⁸

Child Protection Focal Points (4)

To implement Vancouver Principle 4, Member States should ensure that relevant roles and responsibilities of CPFs and CPAs are articulated, educate all peacekeeping personnel on roles and responsibilities, train and deploy designated personnel to serve.¹³⁹

All five countries embedded child protection focal points in peacekeeping mission personnel, in line with both UN and regional policies.¹⁴⁰ These roles often combined gender, child protection, human rights, and civilian-military coordination. **Senegal**, **Pakistan**, and **Ghana** deploy child protection focal points at the mission level, whereas **Uruguay** deploys focal points at both mission and geographic sub-sectors.¹⁴¹

Training requirements also varied. Both the Senegalese CPFs in MINUSCA completed UN pre-deployment training, with one receiving additional Training of Trainers courses through the Armed Forces'

¹³² See also [Creating a Culture of Military Professionalism in Senegal](#).

¹³³ Interviews, Senegalese and Italian Armed Forces, December 4, 7, 17, 2025.

¹³⁴ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 37

¹³⁵ UN DPO, [Policy on Child Protection](#).

¹³⁶ Interviews, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 10, 11, 17, 2026, and January 6, 2026.

¹³⁷ Interview, Key Informant, December 2, 2025.

¹³⁸ Interview, Dallaire, December 12.

¹³⁹ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, UN DPO, December 18, 2025; Interview, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 10, 2025; Interview, Dallaire, December 12, 2025.

¹⁴¹ Interview, UN DPO, December 18, 2025; Information shared by the Permanent Mission of Ghana to the UN, January 27, 2026.

Gender Division.¹⁴² In Uruguay, personnel assigned to child protection roles must complete core, specialized, and reinforcement training prior to deployment.¹⁴³ In **Italy**, the Ministry of Defense unit responsible for training Gender Advisors recently developed a dedicated module on child protection which included reference to UN and NATO policies and the Vancouver Principles.¹⁴⁴

Across countries, CPFs emphasized the essential role of **civilian CPAs** within missions, particularly for case management, referrals, and follow-up.

Monitoring and Reporting (Principle 6)

To implement this principle, Member States should identify the role of peacekeepers within the MRM and provide guidance on reporting on the six grave violations; in addition, Member States should facilitate opportunities for peacekeepers to fulfil their reporting duties.¹⁴⁵

There was little evidence of uniformed personnel reporting grave violations against children through the MRM. Only one Senegalese police officer interviewed claimed to have submitted reports on violations against children however he did not know the MRM by name.¹⁴⁶ A lack of awareness regarding the roles and responsibilities of CPAs and CPFs may be a result of the brief length of training on child protection as described in the prior section.

Experts suggested that peacekeepers remain underutilized in MRM processes due to concerns about training and without sufficient safeguards. As one expert noted, “They [peacekeepers] hear about violations—it’s a missed opportunity—but there is also fear of giving them too much responsibility because of the lack of training and the risk of doing harm.”¹⁴⁷

Protection and Care of Children (Vancouver Principle 7)

To implement this Principle, Member States should articulate peacekeepers’ child protection responsibilities in national strategies and doctrine and ensuring trainings on relevant laws and directives, including the UN Force Commander’s or Police Commissioner’s Child Protection Directives or those developed by the national commander.¹⁴⁸

Several **Senegalese** peacekeepers noted that mission commanders are primarily selected for operational competence, not child protection expertise. While trained personnel may intervene informally — “in good faith” — to advise commanders, this is neither systematic nor guaranteed.¹⁴⁹ This was further emphasized by experts in **Ghana** and **Uruguay** who underscored the objectives of “mission success” and “force protection.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² Interview, Gender Division, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 11, 2025.

¹⁴³ Interview, Dallaire, December 12, 2025.

¹⁴⁴ Information provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, February 3, 2026.

¹⁴⁵ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 37

¹⁴⁶ Interview, Senegalese Gendarmerie, January 6, 2026.

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Key Informant, November 25, 2025.

¹⁴⁸ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p.41.

¹⁴⁹ Interview, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 4, 2025.

¹⁵⁰ Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 12, 2025.

Prevention (Vancouver Principle 8)

To implement this Principle, Member States should identify the prevention of recruitment and use as a core part of mission effectiveness and embed it in national policy and directives. This includes by identifying mission-specific tasks to prevent recruitment and use, including monitoring and protecting high risk areas, limiting the capacity of parties to conflict to recruit and use children, and supporting community engagement.¹⁵¹

The study identified community engagement activities that aligned with prevention:

- In CAR, MINUSCA reported that **Pakistani** peacekeepers led an art therapy session with children to address trauma and stress in 2020.¹⁵²
- The **Ghana Armed Forces** regularly publishes announcements on its community engagement, including with children. This includes supporting civil society organizations through its contingent in the ECOWAS Mission in the Gambia¹⁵³ or leading health education sessions with schoolgirls through a battalion in the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei¹⁵⁴ or supporting children and women through its FETs in MONUSCO.¹⁵⁵

Putting Training into Action: A Senegalese Officer's Experience

A Senegalese Police Officer deployed to MINUSCA as part of a Formed Police Unit (FPU) explained how the pre-deployment training, along with in-mission support from MINUSCA, prepared him to protect children:

As part of the pre-deployment training provided by the National Training Center for Intervention Forces of the National Gendarmerie of Senegal, we received operational training and awareness-raising on child protection within the framework of MINUSCA. This training has helped us not only to better understand the challenges faced by children during and after conflicts, but also to better understand their rights and remind us of our responsibilities.

However, our interventions are mostly guided by our civilian colleagues from the Human Rights Section, for example through seminars and workshops. Upon arrival in the Central African Republic, the contingent also received additional training from MINUSCA on issues related to sexual exploitation and abuse and child protection. These training sessions were particularly important given the frequency of rights violations in the field. Regarding monitoring, incident reports are systematically prepared and transmitted up the chain of command whenever a case involving harm to a child's physical integrity is discovered or reported.

Through sector visits and outreach to remote villages, awareness-raising sessions are conducted for local populations on child protection. Indeed, on a daily basis, the training has enabled us to raise awareness more effectively and to provide better support to children.

Members of the Senegalese contingent play an important role in the protection of children and in the maintenance of peace. **Each patrol and field mission is an opportunity to reassure the population and to ensure respect for their rights.**

¹⁵¹ Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles, p. 45.

¹⁵² Kabatanya, M, *Art therapy for child victims of abuse in Kaga Bandoro*, MINUSCA. June 18, 2020.

¹⁵³ Ghana Armed Forces, *ECOMIG GHANCOY 9 supports SOS Children's Village*, December 23, 2025.

¹⁵⁴ Ghana Armed Forces. *UNISFA GHANBATT 4 Educates School Girls*, November 5, 2025.

¹⁵⁵ MONUSCO, *GHANBATT FET*.

- Anecdotal evidence from one **Senegalese** officer (see Text Box below) suggests the use of patrols and field visits to conduct awareness-raising sessions including on issues related to child protection.¹⁵⁶

While this type of community engagement activities can be impactful, proper training on interacting with and safeguarding children is critical to ensure conflict-sensitivity and prevention.¹⁵⁷

Detention (Vancouver Principle 9)

To implement Vancouver Principle 9, Member States are encouraged to establish clear procedures for peacekeepers regarding rapid handover of children to child protection civilian authorities and provide specific training on detention and transfer of children to the appropriate child protection actor as soon as possible.¹⁵⁸

Several peacekeepers emphasized that any interaction with CAAFAG was guided strictly by mission SOPs and accompanied by mission staff, underscoring once again the decisive role of mission-level guidance. For example, Senegalese peacekeepers deployed to MINUSCA reported that detention-related issues involving children were handled jointly with civilian components, particularly the Human Rights and Child Protection Sections.¹⁵⁹

One expert also emphasized the importance of training local authorities that are responsible for handling children in order to ensure appropriate

response.¹⁶⁰ Others pointed to the importance of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for CAAC's action plans with countries which committed national governments of the peacekeeping context to protect children and ensure proper handover.¹⁶¹

Conduct and Discipline (VP 10)

To implement this principle, Member States should review and strengthen codes of conduct for peacekeepers and conduct training, along with investigating all allegations of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and holding personnel to account. This principle aligns with the UN Zero Tolerance Policy for sexual exploitation and abuse.¹⁶²

Conduct and discipline emerged as a central component of child protection training in **Senegal**.¹⁶³ **Uruguay's** child protection policy adopts a safeguarding framework that integrates child protection, sexual exploitation and abuse, and conduct and discipline,¹⁶⁴ supported by a national legal support system for peacekeeping operations.¹⁶⁵ Through this system, Uruguay provides financial child support in cases where paternity claims involving Uruguayan peacekeepers have been established.

Within peacekeeping missions, it was difficult to ascertain the degree to which this principle was upheld. According to UN DPO data, troops from Ghana, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay had allegations of sexual abuse pending or substantiated in 2024 and 2025,¹⁶⁶ signaling a need for ongoing awareness raising and action related to conduct and discipline.

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Senegalese Gendarmerie, January 8, 2026.

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Key Informant, December 10, 2025.

¹⁵⁸ [Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles](#), p. 49.

¹⁵⁹ Interview, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 11, 2025.

¹⁶⁰ Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 12, 2025.

¹⁶¹ Interview, Key Informant, December 2, 2025.

¹⁶² UN Peacekeeping, [Standards of Conduct](#).

¹⁶³ Interviews, Senegalese Armed Forces, December 4, 17, 18, 2025.

¹⁶⁴ Interview, Dallaire Institute, December 12, 2025.

¹⁶⁵ Elsie Fund, [Uruguay Profile](#).

¹⁶⁶ UN Peace and Security Data Hub, [Conduct and Discipline: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Data](#).

TABLE 5.
Vancouver Principles in Operational Practice in Peacekeeping

	Early Warning System (3)	Child Protection Focal Points (4)	Monitoring & Reporting (6)	Protection & Care (7)	Community Engagement (8)	Detention Procedures (9)	Safeguarding System (10)
Ghana	●	●			●		
Italy		●					
Pakistan		●			●		
Senegal		●			●		
Uruguay		●					●

Conclusions on Implementing Vancouver Principles 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10

There were very few concrete cases of the studied countries implementing these Principles. In addition, mission structures, leadership, and accountability mechanisms were found to be critical to national contingents' ability to protect children. This underscores a need for stronger alignment between national preparation and mission-level implementation.

Across the five countries, few examples of peacekeepers contributing to early warning, monitoring and reporting, protection and referral, and community engagement were identified that aligned with the Vancouver Principles. However, the lack of evidence relates more to the availability of data, and that many practices may be in place by individual contingents are not visible or reported.

While peacekeepers across the five countries reported receiving training on child protection prior to deployment, their ability to act once deployed depended heavily on clear mission standard operating procedures, leadership support, and access to civilian child protection actors, including Child Protection Advisors and humanitarian partners. Where such structures were weak or inconsistently applied, peacekeepers faced constraints in identifying children at risk, responding to violations, or facilitating safe referral and handover to child protection actors.

The findings also underscore the importance of operational culture and leadership. Peacekeepers from Senegal and Italy described how professional norms and a sense of responsibility toward civilian protection shaped were a sense of pride and foundation of their actions. This points to the importance of sustained training and integration of child protection in military doctrine and training, not just as part of pre-deployment preparation.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

This study finds that implementation of the Vancouver Principles across Ghana, Italy, Pakistan, Senegal, and Uruguay is variable and context dependent. No country implemented all 17 Principles comprehensively; rather, implementation tended to cluster around specific entry points shaped by national roles, institutional capacities, and political priorities.

This study concludes that the effective implementation of the Vancouver Principles depends on the interaction of political leadership, sustained preparedness, and mission-level operational support. Training alone is insufficient without mandates, guidance, and coordination structures; diplomatic engagement is necessary but must be reinforced by operational capacity; and mission context ultimately shapes what peacekeepers are able to do in practice.

Different Pathways to Implementation

The comparison across the five countries highlights **three distinct pathways** through which Member States differentially engaged with the Vancouver Principles.

First, **policy and diplomatic engagement** emerged as a common entry point. All five countries used their positions on the UN Security Council to support child protection in mission mandates and to reinforce accountability through sanctions related to the recruitment and use of children. This finding underscores that meaningful implementation is not limited to troop- or police- contributors; Member States can advance the Vancouver Principles through support for UN child protection architecture, political leadership, and donating to aligned efforts.

Second, **training and preparedness varied considerably** in depth and institutionalization. While all five countries included child protection in pre-deployment training—most often relying on UN core training packages—**Senegal** and **Uruguay** demonstrated the strongest evidence of institutionalized training systems, including regular training-of-trainers and integration of child protection into national peacekeeping training structures. **Italy**, by contrast, emphasized international humanitarian law and professional military culture, with peacekeepers describing strong norms around civilian engagement, even where child protection was not framed explicitly through the Vancouver Principles. **Pakistan** and **Ghana** showed evidence of training engagement, but with more limited publicly documented institutionalization.

Third, **operational support within missions** emerged as a decisive factor shaping whether training and policy commitments translate into practice. Peacekeepers and global experts consistently emphasized the importance of clear mandates, mission-level standard operating procedures, coordination with CPAs, and sufficient in-mission capacity. Where these elements were present, peacekeepers reported to support the mission mandate with the support of mission expertise.

Where they were absent or inconsistent, implementation of the Principles was constrained, although training still supported the development of norms and behaviors in line with the principles.

Gaps in Awareness, Documentation, and Measurement

Across all five countries, **awareness of the Vancouver Principles themselves remained low**, including among peacekeepers engaged in child protection-related activities. Most examples of implementation identified in this study were not labelled or reported as Vancouver Principles implementation by Member States, but rather identified and categorized by Watchlist. This limits opportunities for learning, peer exchange, and accountability, and points to the need for stronger implementation of Vancouver Principle 16 on sharing best practices.

The study also highlights persistent challenges in measuring implementation and impact. There are few standardized metrics to assess troop or police performance on child protection in mission settings, making it difficult to evaluate whether commitments produce sustained prevention outcomes. Nonetheless, interviews underscored the importance of **operational culture, leadership, and professional norms**, particularly in Senegal and Italy, as enabling factors that may influence behavior even where formal indicators are lacking.

Ways Forward

In order to strengthen a holistic implementation of the Principles, the study identifies four main areas of action to move the Vancouver Principles forward from commitment to action.

First, **awareness of the Vancouver Principles must be significantly strengthened.** Across the five case studies, awareness of the Principles among policymakers, trainers, and deployed personnel remained limited, even where practices aligned with their commitments. Member States, the United Nations, and partners should prioritize targeted awareness-raising efforts, including through senior leadership engagement, training curricula, and UN and regional bodies, to ensure that the Principles are understood as a framework for action.

Second, **Member States should adopt an intersectoral approach to implementation** while also designating focal points and agencies to carry the work forward. Effective application of the Vancouver Principles requires coordination across defense and security, social welfare and protection, and foreign affairs national sectors.

Third, **stronger communication and coordination among stakeholders** is essential. Structured platforms for dialogue, such as the Groups of Friends on CAAC and regional training networks, should be further leveraged to facilitate information-sharing, peer learning, and joint problem-solving.

Finally, there is a need to **further explore and operationalize the Vancouver Principles within regional peace operations and member-led coalitions.** As peacekeeping and peace support activities increasingly shift toward regional and multilateral frameworks, greater attention must be given to integrating child protection standards within organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union, and NATO.

Taken together, these efforts can help move the Vancouver Principles from commitment to practice and strengthen prevention, accountability, and protection for children affected by armed conflict across peacekeeping and peace support contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vancouver Principles provide concrete steps for Member States to take to prevent the recruitment and use of children across the entire peacekeeping cycle. UN and regional bodies, civil society organizations, and donors all play an important role in encouraging endorsement and implementation of the Principles. The following recommendations aim to galvanize action across all parties to turn commitment into action.

To Member States:

- Endorse, implement, and support the Vancouver Principles in a gender-responsive manner, including by designating responsible government agencies to oversee engagement with the Principles.
- Institutionalize child protection and the prevention of recruitment and use within national policies and laws and sign and ratify international treaties that prohibit the conscription of children under the age of 18.
- Leverage diplomatic and political influence, including through the UN Security Council and regional and multilateral bodies, to support robust child protection mandates, sanctions against perpetrators of grave violations, and the inclusion of child protection provisions in peace processes and political agreements.
- Systematically document and share good practices and lessons learned, including through peer exchanges, regional platforms, and communities of practice, in line with Vancouver Principle 16.

- Promote universal endorsement and implementation across CAAC normative frameworks, including by aligning implementation of the Vancouver Principles with the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

To Military and Security Actors:

- Integrate child protection and international humanitarian law into initial and career-long training for all military and police personnel, to establish a foundational understanding of children's rights and foster a culture of protection.
- Strengthen pre-deployment and in-service training on child protection and the prevention of the recruitment and use of children, ensuring such training is mandatory, practical, scenario-based, gender-responsive, and fully aligned with UN standards and guidance.
- Institutionalize child protection and the prevention of recruitment and use within military and police doctrine and standard operating procedures.

- Enable effective operational implementation by ensuring national contingents are equipped with clear guidance on early warning, monitoring and reporting, referral mechanisms, detention procedures, and child-sensitive reintegration processes.
- Deploy Child Protection Focal Points in all UN, regional, and member-led operations and provide them comprehensive training on child protection, including preventing recruitment and use.

To the United Nations and Regional Bodies:

- Strengthen child protection capacity within peace operations through the implementation of Security Council resolution 2764 (2024), including by ensuring adequate staffing of Child Protection Advisors, clear coordination mechanisms, and consistent application of mission-wide SOPs and directives.
- Ensure system-wide coherence among UN actors, including DPO, DPPA, UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for CAAC, and relevant Security Council sanctions committees, to reinforce prevention, reporting, and response efforts.
- Enhance monitoring and accountability by developing clearer indicators and metrics to assess peacekeeper performance related to child protection and the prevention of recruitment and use across UN, regional, and member-led peace operations.
- Support the integration of child protection standards within regional peacekeeping operations, member-led coalitions, and special political missions, in coordination with regional organizations and the UN. Continue this integration during mission drawdowns and transitions.

To Donors and Non-Governmental Organizations:

- Invest in training and capacity-building, including support to national and regional peacekeeping training institutions and specialized pre-deployment and in-mission training on child protection.
- Provide sustained, flexible, and predictable funding for child-sensitive DDR efforts, including long-term reintegration support for children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups.
- Support the development and implementation of child protection policy frameworks within regional organizations and member-led peace operations.
- Fund research and evaluation to strengthen the evidence base on effective approaches to preventing recruitment and protecting children through peacekeeping.
- Promote partnerships among governments, UN entities, training centers, and civil society organizations to expand access to expertise, strengthen coordination, and disseminate good practices.
- Encourage transparency and reporting by supporting Member States and the UN to document implementation of the Vancouver Principles and share lessons learned, including through regional and international workshops and meetings.



Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

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