



Vancouver Principles in Practice

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About Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (Watchlist) strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflicts in order to influence key decision-makers and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children. Watchlist is a fiscally sponsored project of United Charitable, a US-based 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

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Cover photo: UN peacekeepers from Thailand distribute toys and other items to young people in South Sudan. ©2022 United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

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VANCOUVER PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

Peacekeepers play a vital role in protecting children and preventing child recruitment in armed conflict. In 2025, the United Nations verified over 6,600 cases of child recruitment and use,¹ most of which occurred in conflicts where peacekeeping or political missions are present.²

Since their launch in 2017, the Vancouver Principles have driven meaningful changes in policy, doctrine, training, and in-mission implementation, supporting better prevention efforts and responses to children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG). Notably, over 100 countries have affirmed their commitment to child protection in peacekeeping amid a shifting landscape of mission closures or transitions and cuts to child protection capacity.

This brief highlights promising practices by Member States, the United Nations (UN), regional organizations, and civil society to operationalize the Vancouver Principles and strengthen the protection of children within evolving peace operations contexts. Watchlist's research complements Canada's 2019 Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles by documenting key achievements in the years since the Principles were launched and proposing further actions to deepen implementation.³

Global Action to Protect Children

Today, 107 countries have endorsed the Vancouver Principles, over half of which signed on at their launch during the 2017 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial hosted by Canada.⁴ Though over half of UN members have declared their commitment to prevent child recruitment through peacekeeping, work remains to secure further endorsements, particularly from top personnel-contributing countries and host countries of peace operations. Watchlist and civil society organizations like the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security (hereon referred to as the Dallaire Institute)⁵ support advocacy at the UN and national levels.

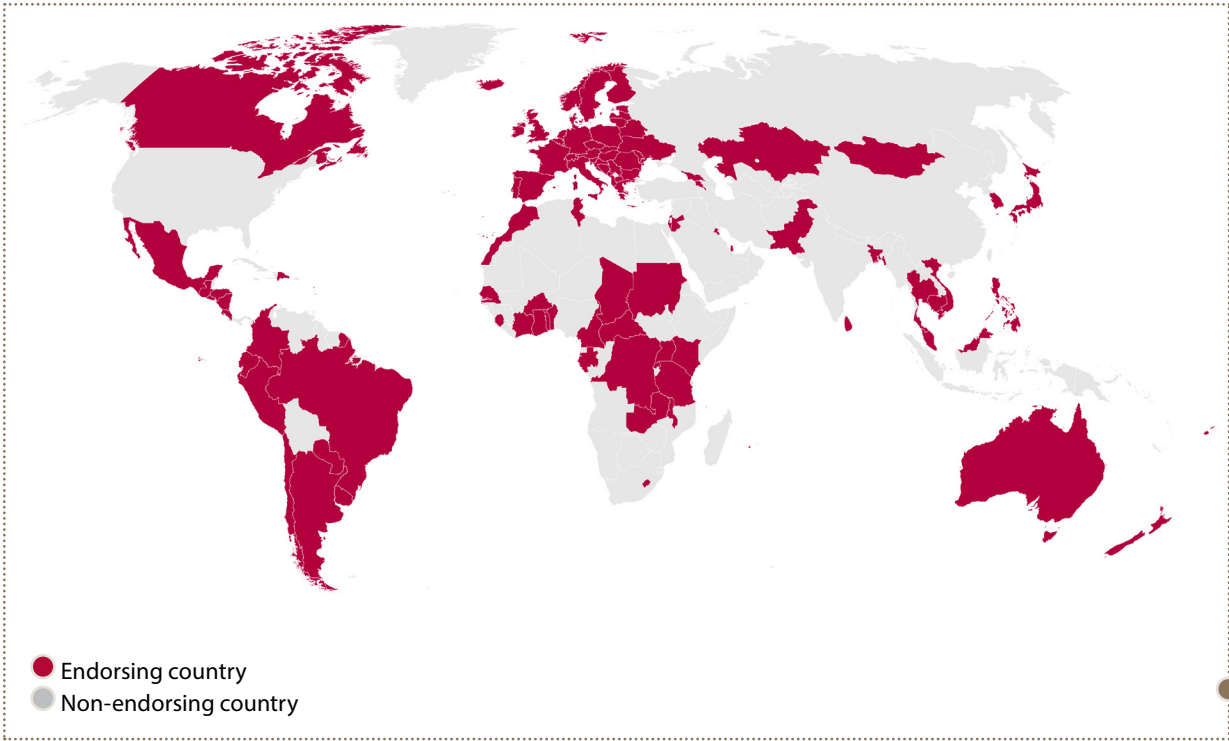
¹ UN, [Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict 2026](#), A/80/723-S/2026/357, para. 7.

² Watchlist, [Implementing the Vancouver Principles: Lessons from Ghana, Italy, Senegal, Pakistan, and Uruguay](#), 2026.

³ Government of Canada, [Implementation Guidance on the Vancouver Principles](#), 2019.

⁴ Government of Canada, [The Vancouver Principles](#), 2017.

⁵ The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security is the co-founder and custodian of the Vancouver Principles.



Advancing Child Protection through UN Processes

The Vancouver Principles call for Member States to support UN-led processes related to mission mandates, sanctions, demobilization, and peace processes. Therefore, a significant achievement of the Vancouver Principles has been their direct mention in high-level fora as well as the increasing use of language on child protection and peacekeeping within policy dialogue and UN processes, including:

- **High-level UN officials have expressed support for the Vancouver Principles, including UN Secretary-General**

António Guterres, who has called upon all states to endorse the Vancouver Principles in his annual reports on children and armed conflict since 2019.⁶

- The former and current **Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict**, Virginia Gamba and Vanessa Frazier respectively, have called for endorsement of the Vancouver Principles and extensively advocated with countries to encourage endorsement and implementation.⁷
- Since 2017, at **UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Meetings**, an increasing number of countries have pledged to provide training on child protection or fund child protection capacity (**Bangladesh, Canada, Germany, Norway, Rwanda, Uruguay**), alongside other commitments that align

⁶ Find the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict [here](#).

⁷ See for example the [2025 Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the General Assembly](#); information received from Global Affairs Canada, May 2026.

with the Vancouver Principles, such as gender equality, mental health support for uniformed personnel, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and conduct and discipline.⁸ Notably, at the 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, **Canada** announced \$7.4M CAD to support the implementation of the Vancouver Principles, including support directly to the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO).⁹

In particular, the UN Security Council's (UNSC) debates, conclusions, and resolutions play an important role in advancing the Vancouver Principles. Since 2017, UNSC processes have reflected the language and commitments of the Vancouver Principles:

- In the Security Council's Annual Open Debates on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), **Watchlist estimates at least 104 statements included reference to the Vancouver Principles between 2018 and 2025.** In addition, Member States have routinely called for the prioritization of child protection in UN peacekeeping and political missions since 2017, including highlighting the importance of child protection provisions in mission mandates and the allocation of sufficient resources.¹⁰
- **UNSC Resolution 2601 (2021)**, which focused on the protection of education in conflict, specifically recognized the importance of peacekeeping and political missions and highlighted "the importance of providing military, police and civilian peacekeepers, with adequate pre-deployment and in-mission training on mission specific child protection issues," an evolution of previous CAAC resolutions.¹¹
- **UNSC Resolution 2764 (2024)**, which was co-sponsored by 111 Member States, focused explicitly on the need for sustainable child protection capacities in UN peacekeeping. The resolution called for mainstreaming child protection into missions, ensuring adequate funding, and improving coordination between UN and government actors, including during mission transitions and withdrawals.¹²
- **Since 2017, Council Members have regularly renewed child protection language in UN mission mandates**, calling for missions to address child protection as a cross-cutting issue.¹³ The UNSC also added child protection language for the first time when renewing the UN Integrated Office in Haiti's mandate through Resolution 2692 (2023).¹⁴
- In establishing **Haiti sanctions regime through UNSC resolution 2653 (2022)**, the Council incorporated child-specific listing criteria, including the forcible recruitment of children by armed groups. Child recruitment has since been cited as a basis for listing three individuals under the regime.¹⁵

⁸ Data from UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Pledge Lists 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2025; Countries that pledged on mental health: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Malaysia, Mongolia, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan, South Africa, UK. Countries that pledged on conduct, discipline, prevention of SEA: Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Ireland, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA, Uruguay, Zimbabwe.

⁹ Information received from Global Affairs Canada, May 2026.

¹⁰ Data retrieved from Watchlist's [Reviews of Security Council Open Debates](#).

¹¹ [UNSC Resolution 2601 \(2021\)](#), para. 23.

¹² [UNSC Resolution 2764 \(2024\)](#).

¹³ Security Council Report, [Children and Armed Conflict: Progression, Regression or Maintenance of the Agenda?](#), 2025(3), June 2025.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ UNSC Narrative Summaries of Reasons for Listing, as cited in Security Council Report, [Children and Armed Conflict: Progression, Regression or Maintenance of the Agenda?](#), 2025(3), June 2025.

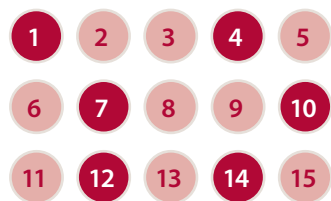
The Changing Peacekeeping Landscape

Since the Vancouver Principles launched in 2017, the UN peacekeeping landscape has shifted significantly. The number of UN peace operations fell from 15 to 11, and the number of those operations with deployed Child Protection Advisers halved, from six missions in 2017 to just three in 2026.

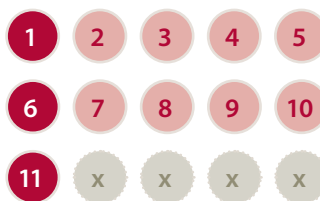
Number of UN Peace Operations, 2017 and 2026

Source: UN Peacekeeping Fact Sheets 2017 & 2025: Canada/Vancouver Principles Implementation on Guide

2017 – 15 operations



2026 – 11 operations



- Mission with Child Protection Mandate
- Active UN Mission
- Closed since 2017

Source: UN Peacekeeping; UN Peacekeeping Fact Sheets 2017 & 2025; Canada/Vancouver Principles Implementation Guide. Note: 2017 child protection figure reflects missions with deployed Child Protection Advisers (UNMISS, UNAMID, MONUSCO, MINUSTAH, MINUSMA, MINUSCA). 2026: UNMISS, MONUSCO, MINUSCA.

This shift is also reflected in uniformed and civilian personnel on the ground. Between late 2017 and early 2026, total UN peacekeeping personnel fell by around half, from 106,544 to 51,715.¹⁶ Police personnel, who are often the component closest to communities and most likely to interact directly with children, fell around 60 percent and civilian staff dropped by around 50 percent. While regional peacekeeping missions have an important presence in countries that experience child recruitment and grave violations, they had half the number of staff of UN missions by the end of 2025.¹⁷

The decline in peacekeeping missions and personnel did not occur alongside a decline in grave violations against children. In fact, the number of grave violations against children verified by the UN nearly doubled, from around 21,000 in 2017 to over 38,500 in 2025.¹⁸

↓ **52%**

total UN peacekeeping
personnel since 2017

↓ **50%**

civilian peacekeeping
staff since 2017

↑ **84%**

grave violations against
children verified since 2017

¹⁶ UN, [Peacekeeping Factsheet](#), March 2026; UN, [Peacekeeping Factsheet](#), November 2017.

¹⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, [Developments and Trends in Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 2025, May 2026.

¹⁸ UN, [Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict 2026](#), A/80/723-S/2026/357; UN, [Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict 2018](#), A/72/865-S/2018/465.

Integration of the Vancouver Principles into UN Policy, Doctrine, and Training

UN DPO's 2017 Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations established the structures and operational framework to which the Vancouver Principles and their accompanying Implementation Guidance align.¹⁹ **With the support of Canada, UN DPO led a four-year project (2021-2025) to integrate the Vancouver Principles into UN policy, guidance, and training architecture on child protection.** This included:

- Updating the Handbook for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations and accompanying Specialized Training Materials in 2023;
- Developing and releasing a new Handbook on Child Protection for United Nations Uniformed Personnel in 2024;
- Delivering trainings on the updated content and supporting troop- and police-contributing countries' national training centers to deliver child protection training;
- Developing and releasing a practice note on child protection-sensitive approaches to peace processes, drawing on good practices and lessons learned from UN peacekeeping experiences.²⁰

In addition, in 2023, UN DPO released the Reinforcement Training Package (RTP) on Child Protection for UN Police and updated the RTP on Child Protection for UN Military, both of which include references to the Vancouver Principles.²¹

Through the Vancouver Principles Project, UN DPO strengthened the capacity of peacekeeping personnel to implement the child protection mandate across strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Between 2021 and 2025, 193 peacekeeping personnel — including 66 military, 105 UN police, and 22 civilian staff — benefited from DPO child protection training courses, with participants reporting improved ability to prevent grave violations, recognize early warning signs, and respond to child protection concerns in operational settings.²²

UN DPO's work also strengthened mission-level command guidance. Through the project, UN DPO revised the Force Commander's Directive template and developed a new Police Commissioner's Directive template, translating the Vancouver Principles into practical guidance on prevention, early warning, monitoring and reporting, coordination, conduct, and child-sensitive responses. As of 2026, three UN peacekeeping operations — MINUSCA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS — have adopted both directives. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, a special political mission, also adopted the Police Commissioner's Directive template in 2024, demonstrating how the Vancouver Principles Project has supported child protection integration across diverse UN missions.²³

¹⁹ Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Department of Field Support, Department of Political Affairs, [Policy on Child Protection in United Nations Peace Operations](#), 2017.

²⁰ Information received from Global Affairs Canada, May 2026 and UN DPO, June 2026. See also the [Civilian](#) and [Uniformed Personnel](#) Handbooks.

²¹ UN DPO, [Child Protection for UN Police, 2023; Information received from UN DPO](#), June 2026.

²² Information received from UN DPO, June 2026.

²³ Information received from UN DPO, June 2026.

Finally, two missions, MINUSCA and UNMISS, have also developed mainstreaming strategies building on the sample mainstreaming strategy template included in the updated 2023 Handbook for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations.²⁴

Integration of the Vancouver Principles into Regional Peacekeeping

According to Watchlist analysis, regional bodies now lead the majority of peace operations, with the EU and NATO making up the largest share.²⁵ Watchlist also found that regional bodies' policies on child protection training and capacity push countries to align their national training and doctrine. Thus, the integration of the Vancouver Principles into regional policies and frameworks plays an important role in domestic implementation.

Since 2017, the **African Union (AU)**, **European Union (EU)**, and the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, the main regional bodies deploying peace operations or political missions, have revised or published new policies on Children and Armed Conflict which refer to the Vancouver Principles:

- In 2022, the **African Union** issued a Policy on Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations as well as a policy on mainstreaming child protection throughout the African Peace

and Security Architecture. The Policy on Child Protection references both the Vancouver Principles and its Implementation Guidance. The AU policy establishes child protection roles and responsibilities and harmonizes definitions and standards with UN grave violations against children.²⁶

- The **AU** Compliance and Accountability Framework strengthens compliance by peace operations with international humanitarian and human rights law, including a strong emphasis on child protection. To implement this framework, the AU has engaged in technical working sessions and institutional dialogues with its Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms, Centers of Excellence, and national training institutions to support its long-term institutionalization.²⁷
- The **AU** is also enacting selection and screening modalities to prevent human rights violators from deployment in future AU and UN mission deployments.²⁸
- In 2024, the **EU** revised its Guidelines on CAAC, incorporating language which recognized the Vancouver Principles and committing to continued advocacy for endorsement by other countries.
- To accompany the 2024 Guidelines, the **EU** also updated its Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict into its Common Security and Defence Policy Mission and Operations. This Checklist

²⁴ Information received from UN DPO, June 2026.

²⁵ Watchlist, [Implementing the Vancouver Principles](#), 2026.

²⁶ AU, Policies on file.

²⁷ Information received from the AU, May 2026.

²⁸ Statement by the Director of Conflict Management, on the Occasion of the Ministerial and High-Level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa, 4 - 5 December 2023, [here](#).

advises EU missions to “raise awareness and provide training” on CAAC-related topics including the Vancouver Principles.²⁹

- In 2023, **NATO** issued its Policy on CAAC which refers to the Vancouver Principles. The Policy includes components that align with the Principles, including calling for the drafting of operation or mission-specific handover protocols when parties to conflict have recruited or used children and dictating that NATO troops treat CAAFAG as victims of rights violations.³⁰

Watchlist found evidence of regional policies in action on the ground to protect children, prevent child recruitment, and build child protection capacity, including:

- In 2024, the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, through the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, embedded the AU Compliance Framework principles within its formal training curricula. In addition, ECOWAS and the Southern African Development Community adopted roadmaps for integration of the Compliance and Accountability Framework.
- In 2025, **EUCAP Sahel Mali** supported an in-depth training on child protection for gendarmes, which took place at the Command of the Gendarmerie Schools and Training Centers. The aim was to prevent, identify, and handle situations in which children are at risk.³¹ As the only active peace operation on the ground, EUCAP Mali plays a critical role in building capacity among Malian security actors.
- In 2024, **African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)** conducted a two-day intensive training for Ethiopian military officers on safeguarding children’s rights and welfare in conflict situations.³²
- In 2025, the **African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM)**³³ supported the development of Somalia’s national Protection of Civilians (PoC) strategy and Child Protection policies and strengthened the Somali National Army’s capacity on human rights compliance and accountability. Notably, AUSSOM successfully advocated for the Somali National Army to strengthen its protection of children framework by distinguishing children formerly associated with Al-Shabaab from adult fighters and treating them primarily as victims in need of protection.³⁴
- In 2025, **AUSSOM’s** Female Engagement Team established a three-year mentorship program to promote adolescent girls’ health awareness and education, addressing vulnerability factors linked to recruitment.³⁵
- Between 2024 and mid-2026, the **AU** conducted trainings on the Protection of Civilians, inclusive of child protection, for over 1,000 participants (72 percent male, 28 percent female) from the Member States, AU, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms, Peace Support Operations, UN, and civil society.³⁶

²⁹ Council of the European Union, Updated Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict into CSDP Mission and Operations, 2024.

³⁰ NATO, Policy on Children and Armed Conflict, 2023.

³¹ EEAS, Child protection in armed conflicts, 2025.

³² ATMIS, ATMIS troops trained on child protection in armed conflict, March 2024.

³³ AUSSOM replaced ATMIS in 2025.

³⁴ Information received from the AU, May 2026.

³⁵ AUSSOM, AUSSOM mentorship program empowers Somali girls, January 2025.

³⁶ Information received from the AU, May 2026.



AUSSOM Female Engagement team conducting an awareness session at Dhobley Primary School in Somalia in 2024. ©2024 AUSSOM

Child Protection and Prevention of Recruitment and Use in National Policy and Doctrine

The Vancouver Principles emphasize the need to incorporate child protection into military doctrine and policy to improve conduct and operational practice for all troops and police. In the context of member-led missions, high standards of national training are critical where in-mission child protection structures or directives are weak or non-existent.

Uruguay's Child Protection Policy Leads to Improved Peacekeeper Conduct

In 2020, Uruguay became the first country to adopt a Child Protection Policy in UN Peacekeeping and develop an aligned training manual on child protection and safeguarding. In 2026, Uruguay recorded an 85 percent reduction in sexual exploitation and abuse incidents by peacekeepers since reforms initiated in 2018 and consolidated through the 2020 policy.³⁷

³⁷ ENOPU, *Uruguay: World Leader in Child Protection in Peacekeeping* (Uruguay: Referente Mundial en Protección Infantil en Misiones de Paz), March 2026. Information received from the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the UN, May 2026.

Watchlist identified several examples of policy and military doctrine that have been developed or updated since 2017 which make specific reference to the Vancouver Principles or strongly align with them:

- In 2023, **Canada's Department of National Defence** issued Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 2023-01, Canadian Armed Forces Responses to Preventing the Unlawful Recruitment and Use of Children in Conflict, which specifies the role of the military in preventing the unlawful recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups across all relevant operations, supplementing JDN 2017-01, the first Canadian joint doctrine specifically addressing potential encounters and engagement with CAAFAG.³⁸
- The **Colombian Ministry of Defense** updated its internal policies to align with the Vancouver Principles after signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Dallaire Institute Latin American Center of Excellence and undergoing two Training of Trainers sessions.³⁹
- **France's** Manual of the Law of Military Operations, updated in 2022, specifically addresses protocol for handover of CAAFAG, including establishing wherever possible partnership with child protection bodies.⁴⁰
- **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.⁴¹
- **Norway's** Manual on the International Law of War refers to the Vancouver Principles as supplemental to the Additional Protocol on the Geneva Conventions with regards to CAAFAG.⁴²
- In 2021, the **Philippine National Police** issued a child protection policy to ensure compliance by its personnel with a national law on child protection and prevent grave violations against children.⁴³ The policy includes provisions for police on interactions and handling children involved in armed conflict.⁴⁴ The **Philippine Armed Forces** also issued Letter Directive No 52, which prescribes policies, procedures, and guidelines to be followed by all personnel, units, and offices in the handling of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict.⁴⁵ The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for CAAC and UNICEF supported the development and implementation of these policies.⁴⁶
- In **Rwanda**, both military and police academies have integrated child recruitment prevention into curriculum. In addition, the National Child Development Agency

³⁸ Canada National Defence, Integrating the Prevention of the Unlawful Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers into the Operational Planning Process, 2024.

³⁹ Information received from the Dallaire Institute, May 2026.

⁴⁰ France, Manual on the Law of Military Operations, 2022.

⁴¹ 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 2026.

⁴² Norway Chief of Defence, Manual on the International Law of War (Manual i krigens folkerett), 2025.

⁴³ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary General on Children and armed conflict in the Philippines, S/2022/569, July 2022.

⁴⁴ Republic of the Philippines, Philippine National Police Child Protection Policy, 2021.

⁴⁵ UN Philippines, UN Philippines chief reviews progress on national plan on child protection and armed conflict, 2022.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, See also SRSF CAAC's work.

integrated Vancouver Principles-related metrics into the National Child Protection Key Performance Indicators.⁴⁷

- In 2020, the **United Kingdom** released its Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict policy which specifically named the Vancouver Principles. The policy supports several of the Principles, including advocating for child-specific expertise in peace support and military operations.⁴⁸
- In 2020, the **United Kingdom** published a fourth edition of its Joint Doctrine on Captured Persons that included improved provisions for children. For each operation, the Ministry of Defence must issue specific guidance regarding transferring or releasing children who have been captured.⁴⁹ New to the 2020 edition, the doctrine mandates that the armed forces must provide an assisted officer for captured persons under the age of 18 and also issues a policy prohibiting the interrogation of captured persons under the age of 18 except in exceptional circumstances.⁵⁰

Case Study: Integrating the Principles Across the Canadian Armed Forces

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) established the Defence Vancouver Principles Working Group to coordinate the research and analysis needed to translate the Principles into practice. The cross-organizational Working Group conducted a systematic gap analysis of existing CAF doctrine, training, and education, benchmarking it against the Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles. This analysis identified gaps across most of the 17 Principles and provided the evidence base for structural reform.

Using the findings, the Chief of the Defence Staff issued a Directive on Vancouver Principles which established six lines of effort: joint doctrine, child protection focal points, strategic and operational planning, training and education, mental health, and a Vancouver Principles network. Canada also extended the application of the Vancouver Principles beyond UN peace support operations, embedding child protection as a standing military standard rather than a mission-specific obligation. Canada also established the Dallaire Center of Excellence for Peace and Security within the Canadian Defence Academy to serve as a permanent platform for training and doctrine.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Information received from the Dallaire Institute, June 2026.

⁴⁸ United Kingdom, *Policy Paper: UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 2020.

⁴⁹ UK Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 1-10 Captured Persons*, Fourth Edition, 2020.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Canada Armed Forces, Overview: CAF Implementation of the Vancouver Principles, 2024, on file.

Enhanced Training Standards for Peacekeepers

All personnel deployed to UN missions must complete Core Pre-Deployment Training Modules (CPTM), and troop- and police-contributing countries are responsible for ensuring the minimum required training. While the CPTM include essential material on child protection, some countries have taken extra measures to heighten child protection training content and align it with the mission contexts where peacekeepers are deployed:

- Following **Bangladesh's** endorsement of the Vancouver Principles, the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operations Training (BIPSOT) strengthened child protection within pre-deployment training. Using UN Child Protection Training Materials alongside scenario-based exercises and mission-specific case studies, the center dedicates around 6–8 hours of pre-deployment training to child protection. Training scenarios explicitly address prevention of child recruitment, early warning, and reporting obligations. BIPSOT also evaluates personnel's ability to operationalize child protection through after-action reviews, debriefings, and exercises assessing responses to encounters involving children in operational settings.⁵²
- **Canada's** Army Doctrine and Training Centre and the Peace Support Training Centre in Kingston, Ontario, have expanded pre-deployment training to cover child protection, including prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and recruitment and use of children.⁵³
- Drawing on ECOWAS, AU, and UN child protection policies, **Côte d'Ivoire** trains troops on child-friendly practices as part of its National Plan of Action against child trafficking, exploitation, and child labor; specialized police for child protection units operate across the country. The work is overseen by an interministerial committee led by the Ministry of Family, Women, and Children which coordinates action across the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Justice.⁵⁴
- With the support of the Dallaire Institute, **Ghana Armed Forces** has instituted a week-long pre-deployment training focused solely on the prevention of child recruitment.⁵⁵
- At the time of writing, the **Italian** Ministry of Defense was integrating child protection into training for gender advisors which included references to the Vancouver Principles and UN policies.⁵⁶
- The **Malaysia** Peacekeeping Centre hosted a Protection of Civilians course with a focus on Child Protection, supported by the **Australian** Defence Force Peace Operations Training Centre.⁵⁷

⁵² Information received via email from BIPSOT, May 2026.

⁵³ Government of Canada, *Voluntary Report on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law at the Domestic Level*, 2024

⁵⁴ Information received from the Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire to the UN, May 2026.

⁵⁵ Watchlist, *Implementing the Vancouver Principles*, 2026.

⁵⁶ Information received from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, February 2026.

⁵⁷ Information received from the Malaysian Peacekeeping Center, May 2026. See [also](#).

- **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 aligns with the AU and DPO policies.⁵⁸ Following engagement with Watchlist, Senegal integrated information on the Vancouver Principles into their training.⁵⁹
- In 2020, **Uruguay** launched the world's first Child Protection in Peacekeeping Policy and, in 2021, developed a Training Guide which is now institutionalized in national training academies, not just the peacekeeping training school.⁶⁰
- In **Uganda**, following the training of Child Protection Master Trainers in 2017, conducted in partnership with Save the Children, the Ugandan People's Defence Forces integrated child protection into military academies' programs in addition to pre-deployment training. By 2019, 9,000 troops had been trained on child protection as part of pre-deployment training.⁶¹

Royal Thai Armed Forces: A Model for Child Protection Preparedness

The Royal Thai Armed Forces has gone beyond minimum requirements to prepare its UN peacekeepers to protect children. Since 2018, Thailand has deployed an engineering contingent to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Early after-action reviews surfaced specific gaps in how engineering personnel were prepared to interact with civilians, including children. Based on this feedback, the Peace Operations Center revised its curriculum to include tailored scenarios, simulations, and role-play exercises. The training package was expanded to incorporate content from the Reinforcement Training on Child Protection for UN Military and UN Engagement Platoons, exceeding minimum training requirements. Gender and Child Protection Focal Points are additionally required to complete relevant UN online training courses. All personnel on the on-call list for deployment are required to complete both the UN Military Observer Course and the Staff Officer Course, ensuring a common foundation before they deploy.

This responsiveness is possible thanks to the Peace Operations Center's unique structure. The Center sits within the Directorate of Joint Operations and oversees the full peacekeeping pipeline: planning, cooperation with international organizations and other peacekeeping training centers, personnel selection, and pre-deployment training. Having these functions under one roof means the Center can identify gaps and quickly act on them.

⁵⁸ Watchlist, *Implementing the Vancouver Principles*, 2026.

⁵⁹ Information received from the Senegalese Armed Forces, April 2026.

⁶⁰ Watchlist, *Implementing the Vancouver Principles*, 2026.

⁶¹ Save the Children, *Institutionalization of Child Protection Training for Peace Support Operations in the UDPF (TCCs)*, 2019.

Strengthening Child Protection and Prevention of Recruitment in Member-Led Peacekeeping

As peace operations increasingly shift beyond traditional UN multidimensional missions toward regional and member-led coalitions, the Vancouver Principles remain relevant for preparing armed forces to prevent child recruitment and protect children in operational settings. Several countries and organizations have integrated child protection considerations into training, operational planning, and mission support outside UN peacekeeping frameworks:

- The **AU** supported the **Multinational Joint Task Force**, a member-led and AU-authorized peace support operation operating in the Lake Chad Basin, to develop a PoC strategy inclusive of child protection.⁶²
- Since 2018, the **Multinational Joint Task Force** received child protection and civilian protection training through partnerships involving the AU Mission Support Programme and several UN agencies.⁶³
- Prior to its closure, the former **G5 Sahel Joint Force** partnered with Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in a multi-year project to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and improve protection of children and civilians, including through trainings delivered in local languages.⁶⁴
- Member States have also supported bilateral training initiatives. For example, **Uruguay** conducted a week-long training on prevention of child recruitment and use with **Guatemalan** forces ahead of their deployment to Haiti as part of the Gang Suppression Force.⁶⁵

Colombia: Integrating Child Recruitment into Peace Processes

Consistent with Vancouver Principles 13 and 14, Colombia has integrated child protection into peace processes, including prevention efforts and reintegration initiatives for CAAFAG. The 2016 Peace Agreement included specific provisions on the release and reintegration of children including mechanisms to support their care and recovery;⁶⁶ children themselves were consulted in the design of reintegration programs.⁶⁷

⁶² Information received from the AU, May 2026.

⁶³ Multinational Joint Task Force, [News Release](#), 2018.

⁶⁴ OHCH, [Project to support the G5 Sahel in implementing the human rights and IHL framework](#), 2022.

⁶⁵ Uruguayan Armed Forces, [Basic Course for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children and Adolescents in Armed Conflict](#), 2025.

⁶⁶ Asokan, A. [The United Nations Children and Armed Conflict Agenda: Integrating Child Protection Issues and Children's Voices in Peace Processes](#), *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, May 5, 2021.

⁶⁷ Stimson Center, [Verifying Peace, Promoting Protection: The Experience of Colombia's UN Verification Mission](#), 2025.

Colombia: Integrating Child Recruitment into Peace Processes (cont'd)

The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has supported implementation of the peace agreement and engagement with armed groups to prevent child recruitment and facilitate access to services for affected children.⁶⁸ Accountability efforts have also advanced: as of 2025, Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace had opened 11 macro-cases, including one addressing the recruitment and use of children.⁶⁹

As child recruitment sharply increased between 2020 and 2025 according to UN data,⁷⁰ national institutions have continued strengthening prevention and early warning mechanisms. Colombia's Ombudsman's Office integrated child recruitment indicators into its early warning system and issued 251 alerts related to risks of child recruitment and use between 2018 and 2023.⁷¹ In parallel, the Ministry of Defense partnered with the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security to conduct training for military, police, civilian, and UN personnel, contributing to updates in doctrine and policy aligned with the Vancouver Principles.⁷²

Civil Society: A Key Partner in Implementation

To galvanize the role of civil society in research, advocacy, and implementation work, Global Affairs Canada launched a closed call for concepts for the Vancouver Principles at the end of 2023 and awarded five projects by: Watchlist for Children and Armed Conflict, the Henry L. Stimson Center, Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), Save the Children Canada, and UNICEF. These projects include advocacy, research and on the ground training of uniformed personnel, regional and local organizations, and other Child Protection Actors, and focus on the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, South Sudan, regional and UN contexts.⁷³ This has enabled civil society to engage in advocacy and implementation work such as:

- **Stimson Center** conducted research, publications, and regional policy discussions to strengthen implementation of the Vancouver Principles and improve peacekeepers' ability to prevent and mitigate risks related to child recruitment and use in peace operations contexts.
- **Save the Children** advanced implementation of the Vancouver Principles through research, policy support, and coordination initiatives in Somalia and South Sudan. The work included workshops bringing together UN missions, AU representatives, and community actors on prevention of child recruitment and reintegration of CAAFAG. The project also supported advocacy and capacity-building efforts to improve gender-responsive monitoring, early warning, and community engagement.
- **Watchlist** conducted advocacy, training, and research to strengthen implementation of the Vancouver Principles, including engagement

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ United Nations, [Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia S/2025/595](#), September 2025.

⁷⁰ UNICEF, [Child recruitment and use by armed groups in Colombia quadruples over five years](#), 2026.

⁷¹ ACAPS, [Colombia: Child Recruitment and Use](#), 2024; The Early Warning Platform is online here.

⁷² Information received from the Dallaire Latin America Center of Excellence, May 2026.

⁷³ Information received via email from Global Affairs Canada, May 2026.

with UN Member States and peacekeeping stakeholders, comparative research on troop- and police-contributing countries, awareness raising with Member States, and development of practical guidance on child protection in peacekeeping contexts.

- **CIVIC** conducted research, training, and policy engagement to strengthen implementation of the Vancouver Principles and improve coordination between peacekeepers and child protection actors. Research was conducted in Mali and the DRC; CIVIC also convened policy discussions with UN Member States, UN Headquarters, and mission personnel.⁷⁴

In addition, as a co-founder and custodian of the Vancouver Principles, the **Dallaire Institute** has advanced implementation through training, policy engagement, and community-level work globally. Through its African and Latin American Centres of Excellence, the Institute has delivered

scenario-based pre-deployment training and professional development for military and police across sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. In several countries, engagement has contributed to the integration of child protection into military doctrine and training curricula, including at the Rwandan and Mozambican military academies. The Institute has also worked at the community level, building early warning and early action capacity among civil society, women-led, and youth-led organizations. The Latin America Centre of Excellence in **Uruguay** has adapted the Dallaire Institute's Training of Trainers materials on the Vancouver Principles for the Latin American context to address both armed conflict and organized crime and to include scenarios for non-traditional international missions.⁷⁵ With the Dallaire Institute, Uruguay's National Peace Operation School trained over 300 uniformed personnel and civilians from Colombia, Ecuador, and Guatemala between 2025 and early 2026.⁷⁶

Promising Practices from Non-Endorsing Countries

In countries that have not yet endorsed the Vancouver Principles, governments and civil society have worked together to align policy and practice with the Principles' standards. In **Mozambique**, the Dallaire Institute has supported the armed forces to establish a Child Protection Focal Point; integrate prevention of recruitment into the Samora Moises Machel Military Academy; and develop a handover protocol.⁷⁷ In **South Sudan**, Save the Children convened an inception workshop with CAAC and CAAFAG actors on the Vancouver Principles. The meeting led to the development of a Joint Action Plan with ministries, security actors, civil society, and Save the Children.⁷⁸ In 2025, **Somalia** developed a Joint National Action Plan on the Vancouver Principles in collaboration with government ministries, women's rights organizations, youth groups, and other civil society actors.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Information on projects retrieved from [Global Affairs Canada's database of International Assistance Projects](#).

⁷⁵ Information received from Dallaire Institute, May 2026.

⁷⁶ ENOPU, [ENOPU Commitment: Training in the Prevention of Child Recruitment](#), March 2026.

⁷⁷ Information received from the Dallaire Institute, June 2026.

⁷⁸ Save the Children, [Inception Workshop with CAAC and CAAFAG Actors](#), 2025.

⁷⁹ Stimson Center, [Ensuring Sustainable Child Protection by UN Peacekeeping Missions](#), 2025.

An Agenda for Implementation

Nearly a decade after Canada launched the Vancouver Principles, meaningful progress has taken place across the peacekeeping ecosystem. Countries have updated military doctrine, institutionalized training, and used their positions in the UN Security Council and regional bodies to advance child protection. The AU, EU, and NATO have integrated the Principles into policy frameworks and operational guidance. In several countries, these commitments have translated into measurable improvements in peacekeeper conduct and preparedness.

At the same time, the context in which the Principles operate has shifted significantly. Grave violations against children have nearly doubled, while UN peace operations with child protection mandates have decreased. Against this backdrop, further action is needed across three key areas:

1. Deepen implementation among endorsing countries. While 107 countries have endorsed the Principles, implementation remains uneven. Countries should assess progress against the 17 commitments, institutionalize child protection within military and police doctrine, and ensure that pre-deployment training translates into operational practice. **Watchlist has developed a Checklist to support this assessment.**

2. Extend the Principles to evolving peacekeeping contexts. As member-led coalitions and regionally-led missions become more prominent, governments and regional bodies should continue to adapt and integrate the Vancouver Principles into domestic and regional security frameworks, ensuring that child protection standards are not limited to UN multidimensional missions.

3. Support the child protection ecosystem. Effective implementation depends on civilian child protection capacity within missions, functioning reintegration programs, and civil society engagement. As funding pressures mount, governments should protect investment in these enabling structures.

Implementation of the Vancouver Principles varies, shaped by each country's troop and police contributions, engagement in the UN Security Council, civil society presence, and domestic experience of armed conflict. Watchlist's comparative research has found that there is no single pathway to implementation — meaningful action is possible through policy, training, diplomacy, or operational practice, and often through a combination of these. What is critical across contexts is that political commitment, when translated into concrete action, produces results for children.



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