REINFORCEMENT TRAINING PACKAGE ON CHILD PROTECTION FOR THE UNITED NATIONS MILITARY
Module 1, Lesson 1
CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT
Learning Objectives

• Define “child” and explain why children are most at risk during armed conflict;

• Describe the relationship between children and armed conflict, and protection of civilians;

• Summarize the changing nature of conflict and its impact on children;

• Describe the six “grave violations”;

• Explain gender concerns and the vulnerabilities that boys and girls face.
Who is a Child?

Article I of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states:
“A child means every human being below the age of 18 years…”

For all United Nations peacekeepers and personnel, a child is any person under the age of 18 years.
Film: A Child’s Fate
Child Protection and Peacekeeping
Children are Vulnerable

• What threats do children face during armed conflict?

• Why are children more at risk than adults during armed conflict?
The Nature of Armed Conflict is Changing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal armed conflict</th>
<th>Regional conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic and sectarian violence</td>
<td>Number of armed groups has increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proliferation of weapons</td>
<td>Rape and violence as tools of war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians are targeted</td>
<td>Civilian and child casualties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Devastating Impact of Conflict on Children

PEACE & SECURITY CONCERNS
- Six grave violations
- Trafficking
- Illegal detention
- Torture and war crimes
- Human rights violations

HUMANITARIAN & DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS
- Lack of food, water, shelter
- Displacement, separation, trauma
- Loss of education, training, livelihood
- Loss of opportunity
The Six GRAVE Violations Against Children

- Killing and maiming
- Recruitment and use
- Rape and other sexual violence
- Abduction
- Attacks on schools or hospitals
- Denial of humanitarian access
Dealing with the Six Grave Violations

• Security Council resolution 1612 (2005)
• The grave violations are against international law
• Reports of violations are sent to the Security Council
• **United Nations peacekeepers contribute to reporting on these violations**
Killing and Maiming

Any action that results in the death of or serious injury to one or more children, including:

- Shelling
- Crossfire
- Cluster munitions
- Landmines
- Unexploded ordnances (UXOs)
- Suicide bombs
Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military

Recruitment and Use

A child associated with an armed force or group (commonly referred to as a “child soldier”) refers to any person below the age of 18 years who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to:

- Fighters
- Cooks
- Porters
- Messengers
- Spies
- For sexual purposes
Rape and Other Sexual Violence

Any violent act of a sexual nature committed against a boy or girl under the age of 18 years, including:

- Rape
- Sexual slavery
- Forced prostitution
- Forced pregnancy
- Enforced abortion

Girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence during armed conflict
Abduction

The unlawful removal, seizure, capture, apprehension, taking or enforced disappearance of a child, either temporarily or permanently, for the purpose of any form of exploitation, including:

- Recruitment
- Information gathering
- Forced labour
- Sexual purposes
- Other
Attacks on Schools or Hospitals

• Physical attacks and threats on buildings (targeted/indiscriminate)
• Attacks or threats against school children
• Attacks or threats on personnel, doctors, nurses or teachers (including killing, maiming, harassment, coercion, abduction)
• Looting and wanton destruction of buildings
• Military use of schools and hospitals
Denial of Humanitarian Access

Blocking free passage or timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to persons in need, (including children):

• Attacks against humanitarian workers
• Looting of humanitarian aid
• Denial of access for service delivery

An estimated 80 million children are denied humanitarian assistance globally.
Gender Issues in Child Protection

- Tasks assigned to girls and boys can differ based on their distinct gender roles within their societies.
- Women and girls face a higher risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence during armed conflict.
- The experiences of girls and boys in armed forces and groups differ, including methods of recruitment, identification, and reintegration.
Case Studies: Gender

• Testimonies from a girl and boy
• Consider some of the factors that can increase the risk of a child being recruited by armed forces/groups during armed conflict
• Reflect on the differences in the experiences of girls and boys associated with armed forces/groups
Jacques was recruited into the insurgent group Mayi-Mayi when he was 10 years old.

“I remember the day I decided to join the Mayi-Mayi. It was after an attack on my village. My parents and my grandfather were killed and I was running. I was so scared. I lost everyone. I had nowhere to go and no food to eat. In the Mayi-Mayi, I thought I would be protected, but it was hard. I would see others die in front of me. I was hungry very often, and I was scared. Sometimes they would whip me, sometimes very very hard. They used to say that it would make me a better fighter. One day, they whipped my [11-year-old] friend to death because he had not killed the enemy. Also, what I did not like was to hear the girls, our friends, crying because the soldiers would rape them.”

Jasime was recruited by the insurgent group Mayi-Mayi in South-Kivu, when she was 12 years old. She is now 16 and has a four-month-old baby.

“When the Mayi-Mayi attacked my village, we all ran away.... The soldiers captured all the girls, even the very young. Once with the soldiers, you were forced to "marry" one of the soldiers.... If you refused, they would kill you... They would slaughter people like chickens.... Wherever we were fighting, along the way, they would take the women and girls working in the fields... They would take young girls, remove their clothes, and then would rape them.... My "husband" did not beat me too often.... But one day, he was killed in an attack. I felt I was in danger and I should leave. On the way, as I was pregnant, I had my baby. I was alone in the bush, without medication. I still have pain from this. Then I went to my "husband’s" village, but his parents rejected me and my child, after taking all my belongings. They blamed me for his death. I wanted to go home, but it is so far away, I was afraid the Mayi-Mayi would find me and capture me again.”

Takeaways

• A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.
• Children face specific risks during armed conflict.
• The nature of conflict has changed and severely affects children.
• There are six (categories of) “grave violations” against children.
• Protection needs of boys and girls may differ.
References (1/2)

• United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525), June 2020
• United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487), June 2020
• United Nations, DPKO (Integrated Training Service), Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials, 2017
• International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition, Landmine Monitor 2020, November 2020
References (2/2)

- United Nations, UNDDDR, Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) 2014 (see chapters 5.20 on “Youth and DDR” and 5.30 “Children and DDR”)
Questions