Module 3, Lesson 1
INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN
Learning Objectives

• **Explain** how culture affects a peacekeeper’s attitudes and behaviours towards children;

• **Discuss** the United Nations code of conduct related to children, and the consequences of misconduct;

• **Explain** the guiding principles on dealing with children;

• **Recognize** the ethical obligations of peacekeepers in protecting children.
Culture, Attitude and Behaviour

• Cultural background and attitude play a major role in peacekeepers’ interactions with children and other civilians;

• Behaviour that may be acceptable during peace time may lead to dangerous situations in times of conflict;

• Peacekeepers should always consider the (potentially harmful) consequences of their actions when interacting with children.
UN Standards of Conduct

• United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines
• The highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity
• Zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and child labour
• Accountability of command
Different Situations, Different Expectations

ZERO TOLERANCE
- Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Child Labour

POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN
- Child Protection Activities
- Outreach and Community Engagement
- Everyday Interactions
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – Definitions

- **Sexual exploitation**: any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person.

- **Sexual abuse**: actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

*Sexual exploitation and abuse constitute Category I serious misconduct*
Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Prohibited:
• Any act of sexual exploitation and abuse
• Using children to coordinate sexual activities with adults
• Other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse

Ignorance of a child’s age is NO DEFENCE
Reporting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

- UN personnel have a duty to report suspected misconduct and to cooperate with UN investigations.
- Good faith reports supported by evidence; reports made to UN officials, to the Conduct and Discipline Team or to others in special circumstances.
- Protection from retaliation provided for reporting misconduct or cooperating in investigations.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Consequences for the United Nations

- Negative impact on image and credibility of the mission and organization
- Affects mandate implementation
- Violation of national or international law
- Fosters a climate of impunity
- Affects security and personal health and safety
- Creates need for victim assistance
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Consequences for the Peacekeeper

• Disciplinary action
• Repatriation
• Termination of contract
• Criminal proceedings
• Financial liability
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Prevention and Response

• What makes children in conflict areas vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse?

• Explain the measures you can take as a Contingent Commander to ensure that the peacekeepers under your command do not commit sexual exploitation and abuse.

• What possible impact can sexual exploitation and abuse have on your contingent and the mission?
Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

NO SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITH ANYONE UNDER 18!

- Knowledge of the age of the child is not relevant
- It does not matter if the child gives consent
- *Instruct the soldiers under your command accordingly*
Zero Tolerance for Child Labour
Zero Tolerance Policy on Child Labour


• Use of children under the age of 18 for the purpose of labour or other rendering of services is strictly prohibited;
• Children are not allowed on the premises, in camps or in facilities of any UN peace operation for the purpose of labour or rendering of services.
Positive Interactions with Children

**CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES**
- Preventing and responding to violence, grave violations, and abuse against children
- Monitoring and reporting

**OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**
- Community Outreach & Engagement Activities
- Quick Impact Projects (QIP)

**DAILY INTERACTIONS**
- Encountering children in the market, streets, etc.
Child Protection or Community Outreach?

Categorize the following activities under *Child Protection* or *Community Outreach*

1. Helping a child who escaped from an armed group.
2. Building a school.
3. Providing security to a Child Protection Adviser investigating a case of sexual violence against children.
4. Advising the armed forces of the host State not to use schools for their operations.
5. Organizing a soccer tournament for local children.
6. Reconnaissance to identify threats to children.
Responses – Key Issues

CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES

• Helping a child who escaped from an armed group.
• Providing security to a Child Protection Adviser investigating a case of sexual violence against children.
• Informing the armed forces of the host State not to use schools for their operations.
• Reconnaissance to identify threats to children.

Done in conjunction with/at the request of the CPA/CPU. Always alert and share information with the CPA/CPU for follow-up action.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

• Building a school.
• Organizing a soccer tournament for local children.
• Provide military escort to UN agencies/partners – when requested.
• Act of kindness with good intentions – always consider the possible negative consequences for children.

It is good practice to inform the CPA/CPU before conducting such activities.
Guiding Principles on Child Protection

① Do No Harm: Avoid actions that may place children in danger

② Best interest of the child: Always place the interest of the child first before you act

③ Coordinate and work with the experts:
   • When in doubt, ask the CPA/CPOs.
   • Always coordinate with and report cases requiring child protection to the civilian CPA.
Good intentions *can* backfire

- Example: supporting an orphanage

Good practices

- What UN peacekeepers *can* do
As you are walking around the unit compound, you notice a UN officer talking to two teenage girls after giving them boxes of food. After a while, you see them in his car leaving the compound.

What should you do and why?
Case Study 2 – What to Do?

You are deployed to a peacekeeping mission. A young boy from the village offers to sweep the military base, take out the trash and clean the cars for a small amount of money. He tells you that he will use the money to pay for his school fees.

What should you do and why?
Case Study 3 – What to Do?

You and some other peacekeepers are playing soccer during your off-duty hours. Some children are watching your game and ask if they can join you.

What should you do and why?
Case Study 4 – What to Do?

You have been deployed to MONUSCO as a Company Commander and you want to familiarize yourself with your area of responsibility since it is a new environment.

You are aware that an armed group has been terrorizing villages in the area, but you don’t know which ones.

While on a familiarization patrol, two youths offer to take you to their village and serve as your guides and interpreters.

What should you do and why?
## Interacting with Children
### Dos and Don’ts (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Do</strong></th>
<th><strong>Don’t</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know your peacekeeping mission’s mandate and role in protecting children. There are actors who can help, where the missions cannot (education, health, food, etc.)</td>
<td>Be discouraged if you cannot immediately help. If you report concerns, the responsible agencies can ensure that children are helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider other options for community outreach aside from building schools and playing soccer</td>
<td>Engage in activities that may place children at risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with NGOs and local communities if you want to engage in community outreach activities with children</td>
<td>Be discouraged if you think the mission should do more. Your contribution to security is critical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Interacting with Children: Dos and Don’ts (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider the possible consequences of your actions on children. If you have doubts, ask the CPA</td>
<td>Casually spend time or interact with local children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain to a child who wants money or work that you are not allowed to give money or work to children</td>
<td>Give money or food to or use children for any services or labour (e.g. cooking, cleaning, washing cars, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report through the chain of command and to the CPA/CP focal points if you see relevant incidents</td>
<td>Have any sexual contact with children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Takeaways

• Peacekeepers should be aware of how their own cultural background can influence their dealings with children and local communities, in order to avoid disrespectful or harmful behaviour.

• Peacekeepers must abide by the relevant codes of conduct and other ethical standards when dealing with children in their mission areas.

• Bear in mind the United Nation’s zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and the prohibition of child labour.

• Always keep the following guiding principles in mind when interacting with children, and coordinate and work with the experts: Do No Harm and the “best interest of the child”.

Reinforcement Training Package on Child Protection for the United Nations Military
References (1/2)

• United Nations, DPKO (Integrated Training Service), Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials, 2017
• United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (A/74/705), February 2020
References (2/2)

• United Nations, The Secretary-General’s Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, October 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13)

Questions