



CAAFAG PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

GUIDELINES

Table of Contents

Acronyms	4
Glossary	5
Acknowledgment	6
Introduction	7
1. Background information	9
A. Introduction to CAAFAG	11
Recruitment	11
Risk factors	12
Roles	15
B. Legal and normative framework	17
International Legal Framework	18
Security Council Framework	28
International standards	21
2. Context analysis	33
Phase 1 - Planning	36
A. Research questions and scope	37
The research questions	37
The scope	38
B. Methodology selection	38
Desk review	38
Risk assessment	38
Needs assessment	40
Consultation of former CAAFAG	41
Gender analysis	42
Stakeholder analysis	43
C. Timeline	47
D. Human resources	47
E. Budget	48
Phase 2 - Getting ready	50
A. Data collection plan	51
Geographical location	51
Sampling	51
B. Workplan	54
C. Contextualizing the tools	55
D. Setting up a referral pathway	55
E. Training of data collectors	56
Data collection training	56
Child safeguarding	56
Gender sensitization	
Phase 3 - Implementation	58
A. Data collection	59
B. Data coding	59
C. Data analysis	60

3. Programme design and strategic planning	65
A. Programme design	67
Key considerations and framework	67
Prevention programme design	69
Release and identification programme design	79
Reintegration programme design	85
B. Monitoring	106
Development of culturally sensitive indicators	106
Measuring output and outcome indicators	108
Development of a performance measurement framework	108
C. Human resources	112
Scale and staffing	112
Competency and skills framework	114
D. Budget	124
4. Implementation and monitoring	128
A. Child safeguarding	130
Child safeguarding policy	130
Referral pathway	130
Training all staff	131
Awareness-raising with children and community	131
B. Data protection	131
C. Monitoring	132
Data disaggregation	132
Programme monitoring	132
Child-friendly feedback mechanisms	133
D. Human resources	134
Recruitment	134
Supervision	135
Learning and development	137
Staff care and safety	139
E. Coordination	141
Coordination between Child Protection actors	141
Coordination with UN, government and other organisations	141
Coordination with other sectors	141
5. Learning and Evaluation	143
A. Generating and Documenting Learning	145
B. Evaluation	145
Bibliography	150

Acronyms

AFAG: Armed Forces and Armed Groups

AP: Additional Protocols

CAAFAG: Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

CAR: Central African Republic

CFSI: Community and Family Service International

CJTF: Civilian Joint Task Force

CPRA: Child Protection Rapid Assessment

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

DDR: Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

FARC: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

GAAFAG: Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

GBV: Gender-Based-Violence

GC: Geneva Convention

ICC: International Criminal Court

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICJ: International Court of Justice

ICL: International Criminal Law

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IDP: Internally Displaced People

IE: Islamique State

IHL: International Humanitarian Law

IHRL: International Human Rights Law

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IRC: International Rescue Committee

KII: Key Informant Interview

LRA: Lord Resistance Army

LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam

MHPSS: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

MILF: Morro Islamic Liberation Front

MRM: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism

NPA: Norwegian People's Aid

OPAC: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

POW: Prisoners of War

SEL: Social and Emotional Learning

SOP: Standard Operating Procedures

UN: United Nations

UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes

YPJ: Kurdish Women's Protection Unit

Glossary

Crimes against humanity

Crimes against humanity means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack:

- (a) Murder;
- (b) Extermination;
- (c) Enslavement;
- (d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population;
- (e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;
- (f) Torture;
- (g) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, enforced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;
- (h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court;
- (i) Enforced disappearance of persons;
- (j) The crime of apartheid;
- (k) Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.¹

Customary law: Customary law derives from general practice accepted as law. Such practice can be found in official accounts of military operations but is also reflected in a variety of other documents, including military manuals, national legislation, and case law. States recognize that treaties and customary international law are sources of international law and, as such, are binding.²

Genocide: Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.³

International armed conflict: this refers to situations where two or more States are engaged in armed conflict.

Non-international armed conflict: this refers to situations where there is protracted armed violence between Government forces and organised non-state armed groups, or between such groups. It continues to exist until a peaceful settlement is achieved.

Participation in hostilities: Covers both direct participation in combat and also active participation in military activities linked to combat such as scouting, spying, sabotage and the use of children as decoys, couriers or at military checkpoints. It would not cover activities clearly unrelated to the hostilities such as food deliveries to an airbase or the use of domestic staff in an officer's married accommodation. However, use of children in a direct support function such as acting as bearers to take supplies to the front line, or activities at the front line itself, would be included within the terminology.⁴

War crimes: War crimes are grave breaches of a treaty or customary rules of IHL, and are considered to constitute the most serious violations of IHL.

They include but are not limited to wilful killing, wanton destruction of private property, torture or inhuman treatment, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer, taking of hostages, recruitment and use of child soldiers, and wilfully depriving a person of the rights of a fair and regular trial, all occurring in the context of an armed conflict.

Unlike crimes against humanity there is no need to establish a widespread or systematic practice of massacres, **as one single incident**, such as recruiting one child soldier or one incident of torture during an armed conflict, would amount to a war crime.⁵

1 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)
2 ICRC. Customary law. <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/customary-law> (Consulted in February 2021)
3 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)
4 Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)
5 Diakonia International humanitarian law center. International Criminal Law. <https://www.diakonia.se/en/IHL/The-Law/International-Criminal-Law1/> (Consulted in February 2021)

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6 Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Mali, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria

Introduction

The CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit was produced by the CAAFAG Task Force of the Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action, co-led by Plan International and UNICEF.

The development process of the Programme Development Toolkit builds on the results of a desktop review and 16 key informant interviews with researchers, government representatives, UN agencies and national and international NGOs.

Additionally, a Capacity Needs and Gaps survey was conducted with 196 field practitioners implementing CAAFAG programmes through an online survey. The findings of the survey informed the content of the toolkit. The [report](#) is available on the Alliance CAAFAG Task Force webpage.

The toolkit was field-tested in four countries, Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Burkina Faso with the involvement of 37 partners. The toolkit was finalized following feedback from 22 participants, 4 months after they were trained on how to use the toolkit.

The objective of the CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit is to provide field practitioners with the knowledge and skills to design quality gender-sensitive programmes for CAAFAG, with the involvement of children, including former CAAFAG.

The content of Programme Development Toolkit includes:

- **Guidelines** on how to design a CAAFAG project with practical guidance using a step-by-step approach
- **Training Resources** to train managers' and other positions in charge of project development
- **Tools** to collect and analyse data to contextualize

The Toolkit is intended for field practitioners working with CAAFAG, who are interested in designing and implementing quality, gender-sensitive and participatory programming.

Field practitioners include national and international Non-Governmental Organisations, National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commissions, government actors and United Nations agencies.

This Toolkit is specifically suitable for managers and those in other positions in charge of project proposal development and project implementation.

The training package is particularly useful to Child Protection technical advisors, programme quality managers and Child Protection Cluster coordinators to promote the development and implementation of quality projects.

The following Guidelines start with Background Information on CAAFAG and then focus on the Steps to Design a Project, following the project cycle, namely 1) Background information, 2) Context analysis, 3) Programme design and Strategic planning, 4) Implementation and Monitoring, and 5) Learning and Evaluation.

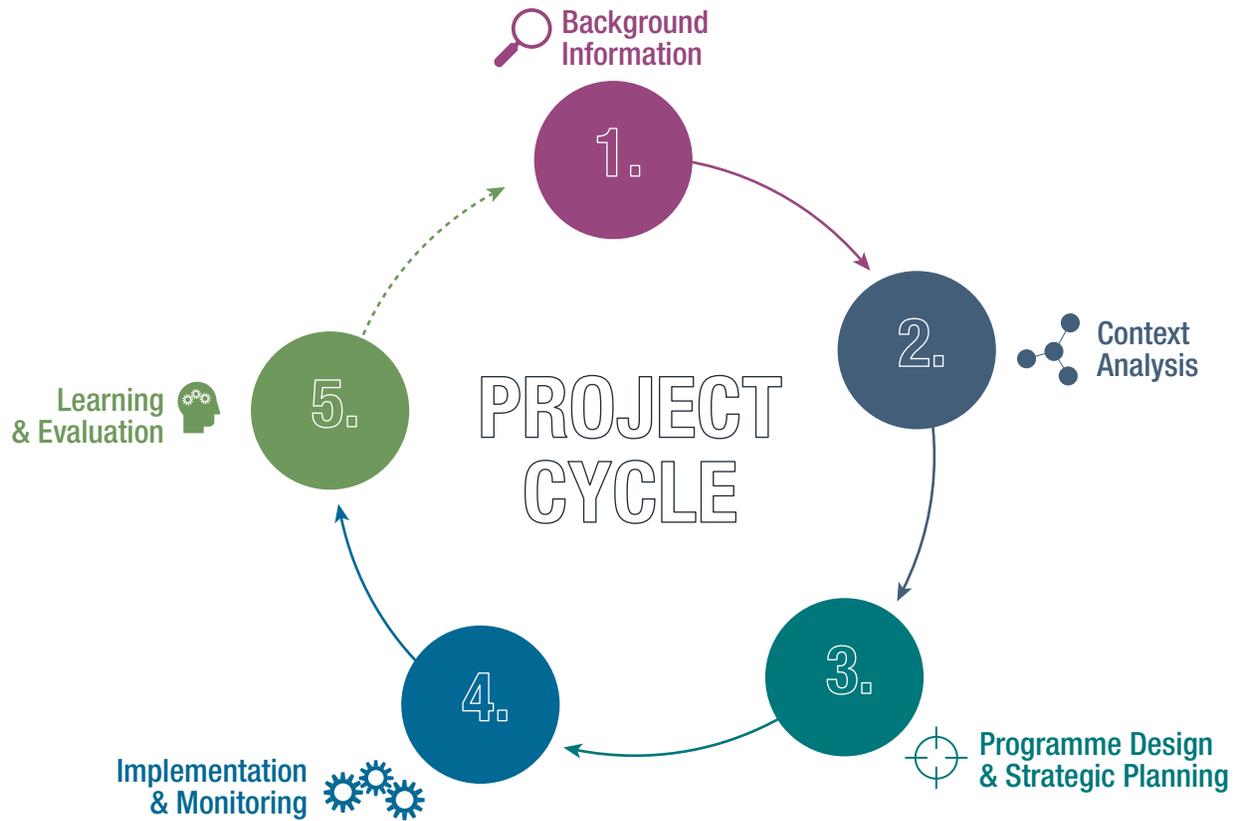
The following diagram summarizes the content of the toolkit following the project cycle model.

Please note that the tools identified with the paper clip icon can be found in the attachments of this PDF. Click on the small arrow on the left of this document and then on the paper clip icon to open the list of tools.



CAAFAG

Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Data Collection Plan B. Workplan C. Contextualizing the Tools D. Setting up a Referral Pathway E. Training of Data Collectors 			
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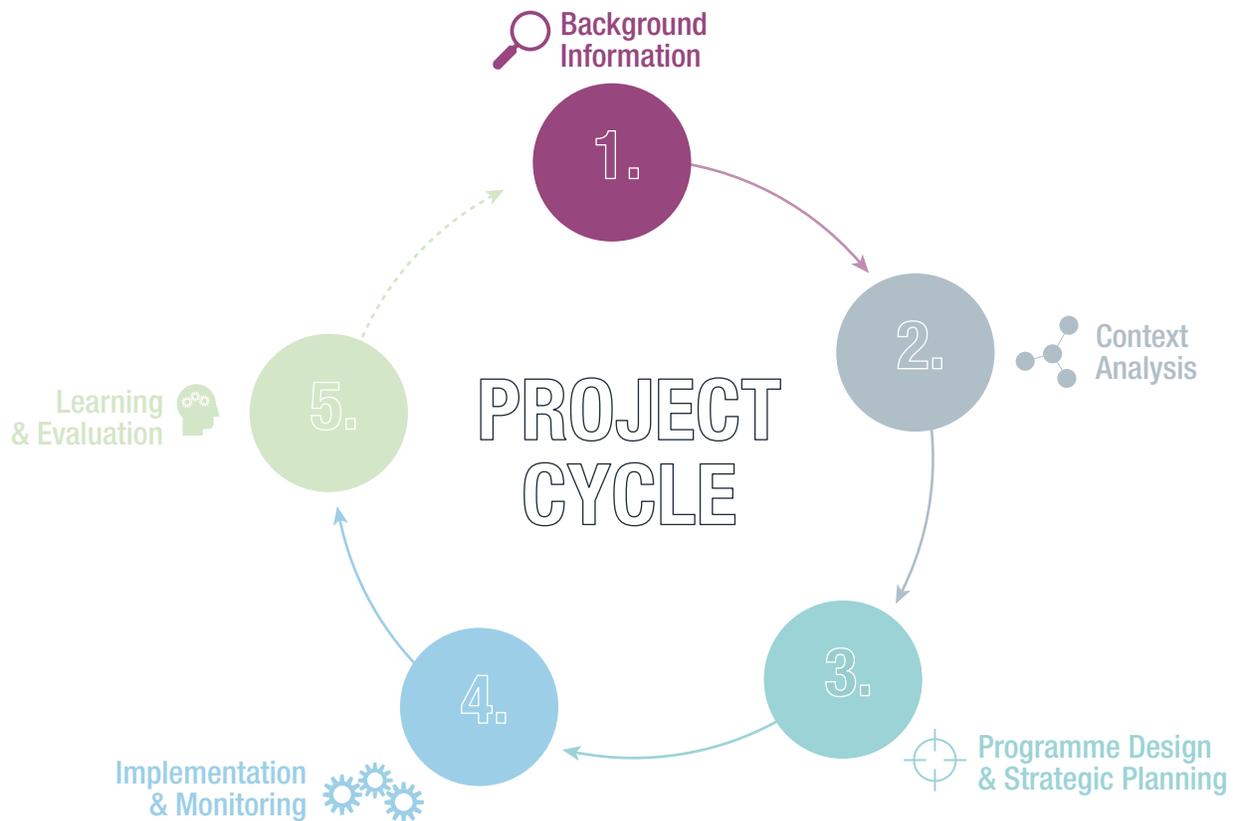


1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION



CAAFAG

Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines



Background Information

A. Introduction to CAAFAG

- Recruitment
- Risk factors
- Roles

B. Legal and Normative Framework

- International legal framework
- Security council framework
- International standards

2.

- A. Research Questions and Scope
- B. Methodology Selection
- C. Timeline
- D. Human Resources
- E. Budget

- A. Data Collection Plan
- B. Workplan
- C. Contextualizing the Tools
- D. Setting up a Referral Pathway
- E. Training of Data Collectors

- A. Data Collection
- B. Data Coding
- C. Data Analysis

3.

- A. Programme Design
- B. Monitoring
- C. Human Resources
- D. Budget

4.

- A. Child Safeguarding
- B. Data Protection
- C. Monitoring
- D. Human Resources
- E. Coordination

5.

- A. Generating & Documenting Learning
- B. Evaluation

A. Introduction to CAAFAG Recruitment

The reasons why girls and boys become associated with armed groups and armed forces vary significantly based on the context, the armed actors involved, as well as community and family dynamics.

The involvement of children, including girls, may be forced or may appear “voluntary”. This distinction may have legal significance for the armed force/group involved, depending on the treaties to which a State is a party.⁷ For example, the African Children’s Charter (Art. 22) prohibits all recruitment of children under age 18, forced or voluntary, by armed forces and armed groups. By contrast, the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict prohibits all recruitment of children under 18 by armed groups (Art. 4) and prohibits compulsory recruitment of children under 18 by armed forces (Art. 2), but permits voluntary recruitment by States under certain conditions (Art. 3). Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibit all child recruitment under the age of 15.

In practice, the lines between the various forms of recruitment are blurred, and purely voluntary recruitment is challenging to determine, as various factors influence child recruitment. Similarly, some children tend to move in and out of armed forces or armed groups, and association may be difficult to define. It is essential to recognise boys and girls agency in the recruitment process and avoid considering them only as passive victims. Doing so disempowers children who may have taken a well-thought-out decision in the context of limited options, for example, to seek protection. Acknowledging their decision-making power is critical for their future reintegration, particularly for girls.

Pathways to association

Forced recruitment can be through abduction from their homes, schools or other locations, or they may be intimidated into joining through threats or acts of violence. In some contexts, girls seem to be particularly targeted through abduction, as armed forces and armed groups (AFAG) perceive them as more obedient and flexible than boys. This was the case in Mozambique.⁸

Abduction can be done in small groups or *en masse*. In 2014 in Nigeria, Boko Haram abducted 276 girls at one time in a secondary school in Chibok.

In other contexts, families and communities may have to give up their children as part of a quota system imposed on communities, as part of non-age-bound conscription laws, or as an exchange in return for protection.⁹

Propaganda is another commonly used tool to recruit girls and boys. Some armed groups and armed forces spread misleading ideas, information or rumours specifically targeting young people for the purpose of recruiting new members. Armed groups can use videos on social media, story books with heroic male and female fighters, and western style military recruitment commercials such as in North East Syria.¹⁰ Adolescents in charge of recruiting their peers can disseminate propaganda when they return to their community or as a dedicated task. Schools, madrasas, and public and religious gatherings and social media are preferred entry points to communicate about the ideology of the group and identify future recruits.

Economic incentive

In contexts where families face extreme poverty, the prospect of access to a regular income, clothes, food or toiletries to cover basic needs can lead to child association. Promises of access to money and non-food items that are not easily accessible are often used to encourage children to enrol.

Family ties

Sometimes, family ties with an armed group serves as a motivating or facilitating factor for children’s association. Some children’s parents are already part of an armed group. Children help their parents or follow in their footsteps through support roles for the armed force or armed group and/or as combatants. In the Philippines, almost all children who were associated with MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) had parents who are part of the armed group or were sympathizers of the group. Children’s association happened gradually and their parents considered it as a normal process of socialisation.¹¹

Community pressure

The involvement of communities in armed conflict significantly influences the recruitment of girls and boys, particularly in self-defence groups. Community ties with an armed group or defence militia can lead to pressure on families to let their girls and boys participate in the protection of the community.¹² Children may be part of the self-defence groups while still living with their families and going to school. Armed groups can also benefit from a very strong support base in the community.¹³

7 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019)

8 Barth (2002)

9 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

10 Wood (2014)

11 UNICEF Philippines (2017)

12 International Labour Organization (2003)

13 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

A close relationship with an armed group fighter can also lead to the recruitment of children, including girls. In contexts of armed conflict where girls are exposed to violence in the community, they may choose to be in a relationship with a combatant as a form of protection. In Colombia, 10% of the girls were recruited in the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) through their relationship with guerilleros.¹⁴

Child marriage is another preferred form of recruitment of girls, with some girls forcibly married to fighters under the threat of releasing explicit videos or pictures that will ruin the reputation of the girl and her family. Some armed groups institutionalised child marriage as a recruitment strategy for the purpose of sexual exploitation, to fulfil support roles for the armed group or force, or as a reward to the fighters.¹⁵ In Syria, the Islamic State's Hisbah female police force was in charge of finding girls to forcibly marry foreign fighters under the threat of rape, abduction or destroying the honour of the girl.¹⁶ Family members may also force girls to marry fighters to benefit from the protection of an armed group, in return for the release of a prisoner, in a response to a physical threat, or as a payment for "tax".¹⁷

Risk factors

Risk factors are environmental factors, experiences or individual traits that increase the probability of a negative outcome.¹⁸ There are commonalities amongst young people in their trajectories to recruitment related to risk taking, reliance on peers, finding themselves, as well as other risk factors. However the journey to association seems to be fairly individual, influenced by family, community, societal factors.

During adolescence, young people are particularly vulnerable to recruitment. They are often full of energy, they go through a period where they build their identity

and look for opportunities to give meaning to their life and to have new experiences. Research on adolescent brain development highlights how biological changes may contribute to hypersensitivity in the brain when they are exposed to an opportunity to gain a reward. This hypersensitivity can lead adolescent brain systems to respond impulsively to get the reward. As a result, adolescent girls and boys can experience increased tendencies to explore and take risks. If supported by adults through healthy learning opportunities, this period can lead to a spiral of positive growth. If not positively supported, it can lead to a negative spiral with problematic patterns of behaviour. Adolescents have the capacity to take decisions, however, they cannot consistently apply these abilities across all domains.¹⁹

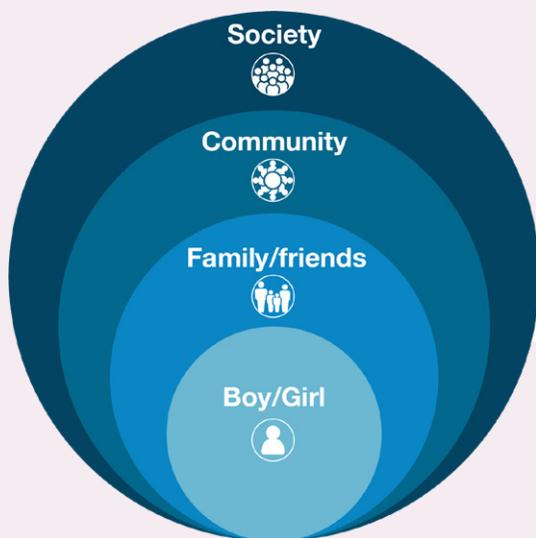
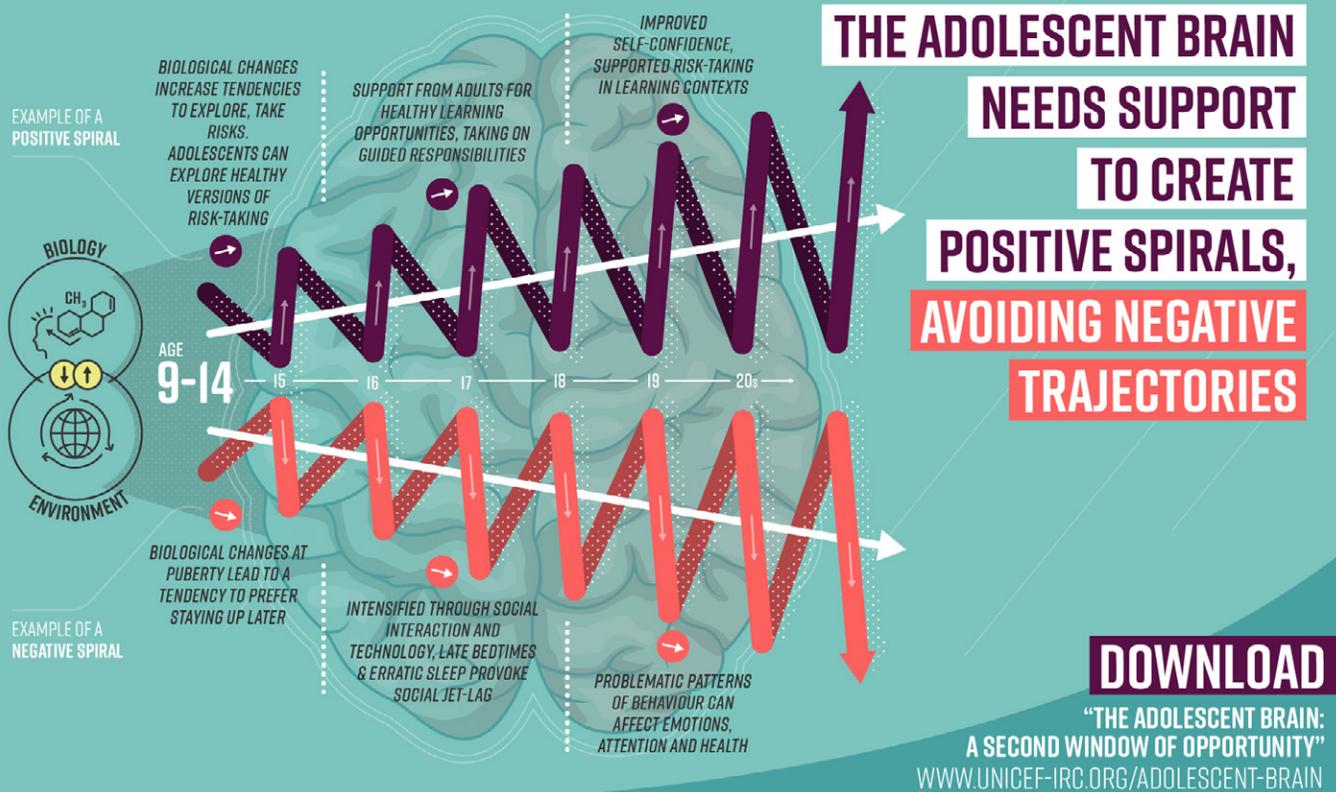
In addition, girls and boys are most often influenced by multiple risk factors which combine to increase the likelihood of their association with AFAG. Risk factors vary significantly according to socio-cultural context and therefore should be identified at the location and community level. Risk factors at the individual, family, community and societal levels of the socio-ecological framework interact with one another and influence boys' and girls' association with AFAG. It is the accumulation of risk factors and the lack of protective factors to counteract these risks that cause a specific harmful outcome, such as association with an AFAG. Resilience factors may also counteract a particular risk or need. Resilience factors can be individual qualities such as flexibility, tenacity, self-esteem; or external such as supportive home environment, peers and communities. Literature from Nigeria²⁰ and Sierra Leone²¹ shows that food security may also contribute to the prevention of recruitment.

The table below highlights some of the key risk factors to recruitment organized by socio-ecological framework levels adapted from the desk review on prevention from the Alliance for CPHA.

-
- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 14 | Moreno et al (2010) | 29 | UNICEF - Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation programme (2017) |
| 15 | Gustavsson et al (2017) | 28 | UNU (2018) |
| 16 | Information collected from key informant | 29 | United Nations Development Programme (2017) |
| 17 | Ibid | 30 | Moreno et al (2010) |
| 18 | Benard, 2004; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992 | 31 | UNU (2018) |
| 19 | UNICEF (2017) | 32 | International Labour Organization (2003) |
| 20 | UNICEF - Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation programme (2017) | 33 | Vargas-Baron (2007) |
| 21 | Delap (2005) | 34 | International Labour Organization (2003) |
| 22 | Mazurana & Carlson (2006) | 35 | Information collected from key informant interviews |
| 23 | Douglas et al (2004) | 36 | Save the Children (2005) |
| 24 | United Nations Development Programme (2017) | 37 | Johnson et al (2018) |
| 25 | De la Soudière (2017) | 38 | Information collected from key informant interviews |
| 28 | Doosje et al (2013) | | |

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SPIRALS

DURING ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



Socio ecological framework

Socio-ecological framework level

Risk factors



Individual level

Need for protection: girls and boys may seek protection from violence and abuse from an armed group^{22, 23}

Empowerment: girls and boys may be attracted to weapons, as these are often a sign of power. Looking for adventure and fun experiences, wearing a military uniform can be attractive to both boys and girls

Revenge: children who have lost a close relative or who are orphans are in some contexts, expected to avenge the death of their parents.^{24, 25} Other grievances include a feeling of persecution of a particular group, experiences of injustice,²⁶ perception of government corruption²⁷

Quest for personal significance: fighting for a cause, desire for meaning, glory or contributing to something larger²⁸

Poverty: the prospect of access money including a regular income in some context, clothes, food or toiletries to cover basic needs²⁹



Family level

Family violence: poor relationships with caregivers, neglect, domestic violence, sexual abuse or forced marriage can lead children to seek protection from AFAG and escape violence

Alcohol and substance abuse and mental disorders of their caregivers, as well as the absence of affection and care^{30, 31}

Separated, unaccompanied or orphaned children are also at greater risk of recruitment³²

Family ties: parents who are part of an armed force or group may encourage their children to associate with AFAG³³ to seek revenge, fight against inequalities and discrimination, or to promote an ideology they believe in



Community level

Community self-defence groups: community ties with an armed group or defence militia can lead to pressure on families to allow their children to participate in the protection of the community³⁴

Lack of strong community level protection mechanism: the community puts pressure on families at community level to satisfy the request of the armed group in return for “peace” or protection for the community³⁵

Refugee or displaced population: they are more vulnerable to recruitment and camps may be an entry point to recruit children³⁶



Societal level

Presence of a conflict: conflicts exacerbate existing hardships and reduce a child’s options for remaining unaffiliated with an armed group

Low presence of State: the absence of governance structure, basic services, livelihood options and strong inequalities at societal level in remote areas, can leave a population at the mercy of armed groups³⁷

Lack of economic opportunities: the lack of opportunities in remote areas pushes children to seek opportunities with armed groups instead

Marginalisation of a minority group whose rights are denied by the State can be used by armed groups to “justify” their action and recruit children to fight for a cause³⁸

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 1 - How and Why Children Become Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

Roles

Girls and boys are involved in a variety of roles which are often multiple and fluid. They may have been involved in direct participation in hostilities such as combat roles in some contexts and in others, they have been indirectly involved, playing support roles, and been used for sexual purposes.³⁹ In many AFAG, the roles of children are dictated by commanders, while in other AFAG, children exhibit more agency over their roles.⁴⁰

Indirect participation in hostilities

Support roles

Roles are often in line with the gendered roles girls and boys fulfil in the society, although not in every context. Some AFAG, have a high proportion of girls who directly participate in hostilities.

In many AFAG, roles played by girls and boys include a variety of responsibilities such as cooking, being a porter, washing clothes, fetching water or firewood, looking after the children of the combatants or guarding other abductees. Children may also serve as spies, scouts, messengers, drug dealer⁴¹, tax collectors, radio-operators, recruiters, translators, weapon cleaners, medical assistants, nurses, midwives, bursars or logisticians. Children can also work on farms and fields, as well as in mines of AFAG.

In Sri Lanka, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam) taught girls to read maps and use a compass, how to tie knots, engage in detective work and do relief work for civilians to gain support from the communities.⁴²

Sexual abuse and exploitation

There are no global statistics on the prevalence of sexual abuse of girls associated with armed forces and armed groups, and it varies significantly based on the context. However, research shows that girls who were abducted are at greater risk of sexual abuse.⁴³ In some cases, girls have been sexually exploited by multiple fighters or been married to a fighter or commander. In some contexts, there are reports of girls who have been designated as a “bush wife” to a fighter which can be considered as a form of protection. In these circumstances “only” one man would have the right to abuse the girl as opposed to other scenarios where the girls were not seen as the exclusive property or spouse of one man and were vulnerable to being preyed on by multiple men a day. In some contexts such as Syria or Nigeria⁴⁴, girls could be married multiple times. If their “husband” died during combat, they would be immediately remarried to another fighter. In Mali, several fighters could collect money to contribute to a dowry which would give them “rights” to sexually abuse the girl.⁴⁵

Certain AFAG take different stances on the age of girls that can be married or used for sexual purposes. Sometimes, fighters prioritise young girls for sexual abuse while in other cases they target only girls over 15.

Not all armed forces and armed groups engage in the sexual abuse or exploitation of girls. A study suggests that AFAG with a Marxist ideology that promotes gender equality tend to better protect girls from sexual violence by other group members.⁴⁶

Boys associated with armed forces and armed groups are also exposed to sexual violence, although girls are disproportionately affected.

Sexual violence against boys is often categorised as “torture, inhumane acts or cruel treatments”, without recognizing sexual violence as a specific violence on its own. Boys are often reluctant reporting sexual abuse because of the stigma related to homosexual acts. Sexual violence against boys can take the form of rape, including gang rape, sometimes using objects, genital violence and forced witnessing of sexual violence on other men and boys. For instance, in CAR, some boys who were captives of armed groups and boys associated with armed groups were sexually abused as a form of punishment.⁴⁷

Bacha baazi

In Afghanistan, some members of the armed forces and armed groups exploit and sexually abuse boys. It is known as the practice of ‘bacha baazi’ (boy-play) where boys dress like girls and dance and are used for sexual and social entertainment by warlords and other armed groups’ leaders. Former CAAFAG boys in detention are also vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Van Engeland A (2019) The voiceless child soldier of Afghanistan. Research handbook on child soldier

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, S/2008/695, 10 November 2008, para. 48 - 50

Save the Children. (2021) Weapon of war. Sexual violence against children in conflict.

Direct participation in hostilities

Girls and boys can be engaged in direct participation in hostilities.

Boys are used in the battlefield as soldiers, executors, suicide bombers and commandos. They can also be used at checkpoints. In Syria, the Islamic State taught boys how to enter a property, how to ambush moving targets and they trained them as snipers.⁴⁸

In Uganda, the LRA taught them how to operate and dismantle arms, lay land mines, how to target the enemy and how to march. They learn military strategies and tactics. Some children are selected as bodyguards for commanders and are taught how to protect their superior.⁴⁹

Girls have been reported to directly participate in hostilities in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Their roles are multiple and include surveillance of checkpoints, money extortion, suicide bombing and combat. In some groups, girls can access management or command roles. Groups with a Marxist ideology tend to have a higher proportion of girls who directly participate in hostilities as they promote gender equality in all functions, including in fighting. Some of these groups have female-only brigades, such as the Kurdish Women's Protection Unit (YPJ) in Northeast Syria. Girls who directly participate in hostilities are trained to use weapons of all kinds.⁵⁰ In African contexts such as Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR), some armed groups have used girls as guardians of religious idols meant to protect the fighters and make them invincible.⁵¹

Age influences the use of girls and boys in hostilities, although physical and emotional maturity seems to have more influence than age.⁵²

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 2 - The Impacts on Children of Child Recruitment and Use by Armed Forces and Armed Groups



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39 For more information on the distinction between direct and indirect participation in hostilities, see the International Committee of the Red Cross Interpretive guidance on the notion of direct participation in hostilities under humanitarian law

40 Wessells (2006)

41 Van Engeland (2019)

42 Spellings (2008)

43 Wessells (2006)

44 Information collected from key informants

45 Information collected from key informants

46 Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

47 All Survivors Project Foundation (2018)

48 Harper (2018)

49 Vermeij (2011)

50 Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action. (2020)

51 Ibid

52 Vermeij (2011)

B. Legal and normative framework

Child recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups is prohibited by international human rights law (IHRL), international humanitarian law (IHL) and international criminal law (ICL)⁵³. The age under which recruitment is prohibited varies depending on what treaty a State is party to and domestic legislation. It generally varies between age 15 to 18. Some treaties prohibit recruitment and use below the age of 15⁵⁴ and others raise that age⁵⁵. For example, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) and the African Charter expressly set the age at 18⁵⁶.

Since the ground-breaking Graça Machel report in 1996, and the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, preventing and responding to child recruitment and use “has been placed firmly on the international agenda”⁵⁷. “The urgency to address the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups has gained recognition by the international community.”⁵⁸

Prior to this, States have agreed to prohibit child recruitment under a certain age, in the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions followed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. With increasing momentum over time, a substantial body of international law, UN Security Council resolutions and interagency standards has been developed to prevent and respond to the issue.

The international legal framework to prevent child recruitment and use and support release and reintegration, recognize children as rights-holders while also according

them special protection as persons who are particularly vulnerable and are entitled to special respect and protection. However, there are differences in terms of age of recruitment between the IHRL, IHL and ICL. IHL in the additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and ICL through the Rome Statute consider the minimum age of recruitment to be 15. IHRL in the CRC indicates 15 as well. However, the age of recruitment has increased over the years as the legal framework is becoming more protective. Thus, compulsory recruitment by State armed forces (not voluntary), and any recruitment by armed groups has been raised to 18 through the OPAC. Beyond the CRC and OPAC, regional human rights instruments including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, or the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam, may also apply to contexts where the Vancouver Principles are implemented⁵⁹. In addition, these legal instruments are applicable only to signatory States.

Besides legal instruments, non-binding standards or principles apply to the recruitment of children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

An understanding of relevant international and national law, customary law and practices of community law and standards is essential in order to lobby parties to the conflict and the international community to fulfil their legal responsibilities and also to guide the protection of children. A good, basic understanding of the major provisions on child recruitment, use, release and reintegration and key documents is also essential when developing effective policy and programming for preventing and addressing the phenomenon.⁶⁰

The legal and normative framework related to children associated with armed forces and armed groups is organised around the International Legal Framework, the Security Council Framework, and related International Standards.

53 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

54 Treaties that fix the minimum age for recruitment and participation in hostilities at 15 are notably the CRC (Articles 38(2) and 38(3)); Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977 (Article 77(2)); and Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions of 1977 (Article 4(3)(2)).

55 OPAC obliges States Parties to raise the minimum age for the voluntary recruitment of persons into their national armed forces from 15, see Article 3(1).

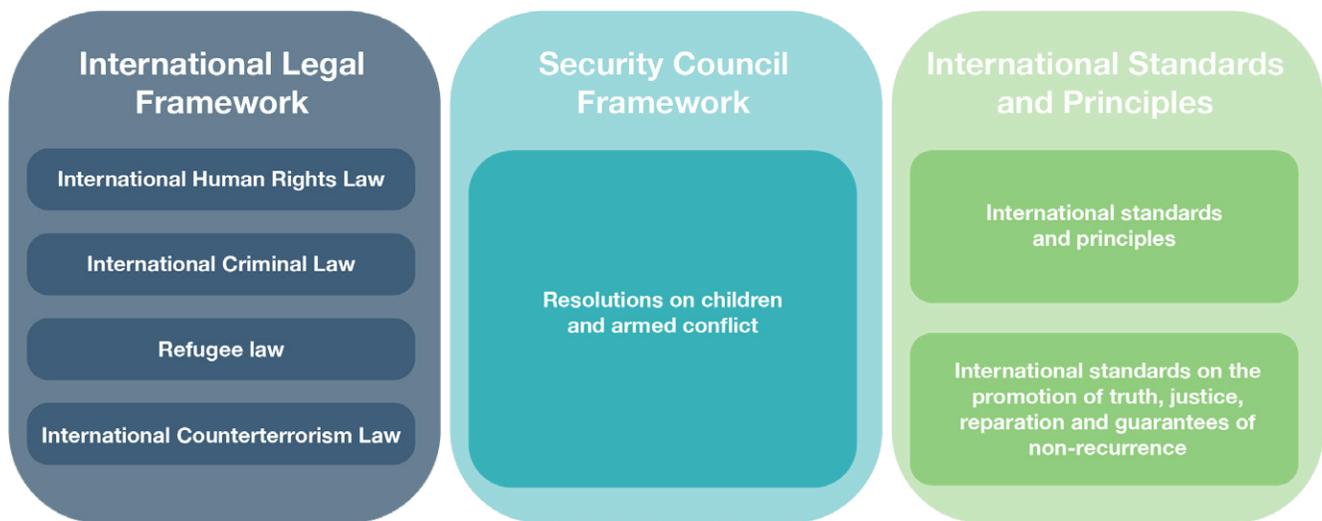
56 The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children fixes a minimum age of 18, see Article 22(2). OPAC prohibits armed groups from recruiting or using persons under the age of 18, see Article 4(1). The ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which addresses the unlawful recruitment of children in Article 3(a), applies to persons under the age of 18 (Article 2).

57 Office of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virtual library: International law

58 Fifth Ministerial Follow-up Forum to the Paris Commitments and Paris Principles on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2012)

59 Article 22(2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children provides that “States who are Parties to the present Charter shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child.” Article 17(5) of the Covenant of the Rights of the Child in Islam states that States Parties shall take necessary measures “to protect children by not involving them in armed conflicts or wars.”

60 ARC Resource pack (2009)



International Legal Framework

The international legal frameworks are made up mainly of laws contained within International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and International Criminal Law. In some contexts, provisions of Refugee Law and Counter-terrorism Law are also relevant. The international legal framework refers to both international and internal (also referred to as ‘non-international’) armed conflicts, and the international and regional instruments apply to Member States who have signed them as well as the application decree if relevant.⁶¹

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

IHL is a set of rules that seeks to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare. The main rules of IHL are found in the Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols (1977), and customary international law.⁶²

They apply in times of armed conflict, both international armed conflict and non-international armed conflict.

International armed conflict (IAC) refers to situations where two or more States are engaged in armed conflict. In such conflicts, IHL applies, in the form of the four Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, customary IHL and fundamental human rights.

Non-international armed conflict (NIAC) refers to situations where there is protracted armed violence between Government forces and organised non-state armed groups, or between such groups. It continues to exist until a peaceful settlement is achieved, similarly to international armed conflict. In such conflicts, IHL, in the form of Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions for States parties thereto, Additional Protocol II for States which are parties to relevant conflicts, customary IHL, and human rights law.⁶³ There are less legal provisions in NIAC, however the development of international customary law tends to minimize the difference between NIAC and IAC. The majority of armed conflicts worldwide are NIAC.⁶⁴

The parties to a conflict must, at all times, distinguish between the civilian population and combatants (in an IAC) or fighters and persons directly taking part in hostilities (in a NIAC). IHL sets core principles: (i) the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, (ii) the prohibition to attack those not fighting or no longer fighting is another fundamental rule, (iii) the prohibition to inflict unnecessary suffering, (iv) the principle of proportionality, (v) the principle of military necessity, (vi) the principle of humanity⁶⁵ and (vii) the principle of precautions.⁶⁶

Who does IHL apply to?

All parties to a conflict are bound by IHL.

- States armed groups
- Organized non-state armed groups

61 Paris Principles Steering Committee. 2022

62 The ICRC’s 2005 Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law identified a number of rules of IHL that apply to all States regarding children. See in particular rules 135, 136, and 137 available online here: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul

63 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and armed conflict (2011)

64 UN DPKO (2017)

65 Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre. Basic Principles of IHL. <https://www.diakonia.se/en/ihl/the-law/international-humanitarian-law-1/introduction-to-ihl/principles-of-international-law/> (Consulted in March 2021)

66 Rule 15. Principle of precaution in attacks https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule15

All States and the international community must “respect and ensure” the IHL. *Respect* means that parties to IHL treaties must apply these treaties in good faith. *Ensure respect* has a broader meaning. States which are parties to IHL treaties, whether or not engaged in a conflict, and the international community, must take all possible steps to ensure that rules are respected by all, and in particular by parties to conflict.⁶⁷

International Human Rights Law (IHRL)

Human rights law is a set of international rules, established by treaty or custom, on the basis of which individuals and groups can expect and/or claim certain rights that their States must respect and protect. The body of international human rights standards also contains numerous non-treaty-based principles and standards (‘soft law’) such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and OPAC.

IHRL applies in both times of war and peace to all human beings and they are fundamental human rights. Human Rights are universal and no one can take away a person’s human rights.⁶⁸

Who does IHRL apply to?

Human rights law, developed primarily for peacetime, applies to all persons under the jurisdiction of a State. Unlike IHL, it does not distinguish between combatants and civilians or provide for categories of ‘protected person’.⁶⁹

International Criminal Law (ICL)

International criminal law is based, among other treaties, on the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols and the Rome Statute. ICL deals with the criminal responsibility of individuals for the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I establish that certain violations of IHL are to be considered “grave breaches”. Other serious violations of IHL, established by customary international law and by international criminal law treaties together with grave breaches, constitute war crimes.⁷⁰

The Rome Statute includes the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), a permanent institution

that has the power to exercise jurisdiction over persons for serious international crimes.⁷¹ The four categories of international crimes are war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression.

Additional international jurisdictions have been established to try individuals who have committed international crimes, such as the international penal tribunals for ex-Yugoslavia and Rwanda or the Extraordinary Chambers in the courts of Cambodia.

Moreover, some countries have adopted Universal Jurisdiction laws⁷² that allow states or international organizations to prosecute individuals for serious crimes against international law regardless of where the alleged crime was committed and regardless of the accused’s nationality, country of residence or any other relationship with the prosecuting entity. The crimes prosecuted under universal jurisdiction are crimes against international law such as crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, and torture.⁷³

Countries include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Malaysia, Senegal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

International criminal law is a relatively new and constantly developing branch of international law. ICL criminalises the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL), and exposes perpetrators of such conduct to criminal liability.⁷⁴

Who does ICL apply to?

ICL provides for criminal sanctions that apply to all perpetrators. This includes individuals who are involved in the planning and authorisation of such acts as well as those who directly commit the crimes. As such, those at the highest political and military levels can be held to account for international crimes.⁷⁵

Those individuals can be nationals of one of the States which are parties to the Rome Statute or the crime was committed on the territory of a State Party, or the State involved submits a declaration allowing the ICC’s jurisdiction regarding the alleged crime.⁷⁷

67 ICRC Blog Who is bound by IHL ? 13/08/2017. <https://blogs.icrc.org/ilot/2017/08/13/who-is-bound-by-ihl/> (Consulted in February 2021)

68 ICRC. What is the difference between IHL and human rights law ? January 2015. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/what-difference-between-ihl-and-human-rights-law> (Consulted in February 2021)

69 Customary IHL Rule 156, definition of war crimes: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule156

70 ICRC. Grave breaches. <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/grave-breaches> (Consulted in February 2021)

71 Article 1 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

72 Customary IHL Rule 157. States have the right to vest universal jurisdiction in their national courts over war crimes. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule157

73 International Justice Resource Center. Universal Jurisdiction. <https://ijrcenter.org/cases-before-national-courts/domestic-exercise-of-universal-jurisdiction/> (Consulted in March 2021)

74 ICC. Understanding the International Criminal Court.

75 Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre. International criminal law. <https://www.diakonia.se/en/IHL/The-Law/International-Criminal-Law1/> (Consulted in February 2021)

77 International Criminal Court (2019)

In addition, several States have adopted “Universal Jurisdiction Laws”, laws that allow prosecution of individuals for grave violations of IHL and IHRL committed abroad. Thus jurisdiction of these countries can try individuals, even if there is no connecting factor to the State.

International Refugee Law

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol are the core of the international refugee protection system, complemented by regional treaties and declarations that also address the rights of refugees. International refugee law operates in conjunction with international human rights law, starting with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and with international humanitarian law.

The 1967 Protocol is integrally related to the 1951 Convention. It removes the temporal and geographic limits found in the Convention. Thus, signatory States agree to apply the core content of the 1951 Convention (Articles 2–34) to all persons covered by the Protocol’s refugee definition, without limitations of time or place.⁷⁸

Refugee children are at high risk of recruitment by armed groups. International refugee law applies to refugee children if the host state has signed the relevant convention and protocol.

The unlawful recruitment or use of children is a form of persecution that may justify the granting of refugee status, if acts are related to one of the 1951 Convention grounds. The Convention Grounds for persecution encompass race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.⁷⁹

The principle of non-refoulement (the practice of not forcing refugees or asylum seekers to return to a country in which they are liable to be subjected to persecution) also applies to CAAFAG. Children must not be returned to where there is a risk of unlawful recruitment.⁸⁰

Where former or active child combatants are identified in a country of asylum, child-friendly procedures must be in place to ensure that their best interests are a primary consideration in all decisions relating to their protection and care, usually through a “Best Interests” procedure.⁸¹

International Counter Terrorism Law

Since 1963, the international community has elaborated 19 international legal instruments to prevent terrorist acts. In 2006, the UN Security Council has adopted a resolution 60/288, including the [UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy](#) and a Plan of Action, which was revised in 2021 ([A/RES/75/291](#)).⁸² This was the first time that the United Nations Membership had agreed and adopted a common strategic approach and framework to fight terrorism. The Counter Terrorism Strategy is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism, including by strengthening cooperation between all key actors. Its adoption demonstrated a resolve to take practical steps individually and collectively to prevent and combat terrorism. Those practical steps include measures ranging from strengthening state capacity to counter-terrorist threats, to better coordinating the United Nations system’s counter-terrorism activities.⁸³

However, National Counterterrorism Laws are rarely protective of child rights and may not take into consideration the needs of children associated with armed groups designated as terrorists.

Security Council Framework

According to the UN Charter, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Security Council Resolutions on children and armed conflict

The Security Council has issued several resolutions related to Children and Armed Conflict to request the UN to:

- gather and verify information detailing where and how armed conflict affects children,
- use this information in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict presented to the Security Council,
- name parties to conflict who commit violations that are triggers for listing,
- engage dialogue with listed governments and armed groups to develop action plans to halt and prevent violations affecting children.⁸⁴

78 UNHCR (2017)

79 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Art A (2)

80 UNHCR (2013)

81 UNHCR (2008)

82 UN Office of Counter-Terrorism. International Legal Instruments <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/international-legal-instruments> (Consulted in February 2021)

83 UNODC. Module 3 : Overview of the International Counter-Terrorism Legal Framework. <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-3/key-issues/un-global-ct-strategy.html> (Consulted in February 2021)

Resolution 1612

This resolution sets up the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism that monitors and reports instances of the 6 grave violations. The 6 grave violations against children include:

- Recruitment or use of children in armed forces and armed groups
- Killing and maiming of children
- Rape and other grave sexual violence
- Attacks on schools and hospitals
- Abduction of children
- Denial of humanitarian access for children

Monitoring and reporting is done in strictly confidential manner to protect children and communities as well as agencies who are reporting. Information collected is used in advocacy by a country-level task force on monitoring & reporting (CTFMR) led by the UN to advocate to governments and parties to conflict to end violations and to release children who have been recruited.

Information collected through MRM is available in an annual report from the UN Secretary General on the 6 grave violations, including recruitment and use of boys and girls. The UN through UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, are responsible for negotiating with listed parties to the conflict Action Plans to end and prevent grave violations.

Are resolutions legally binding?

The effect of resolutions differs according to the type of resolution. Resolution is a generic term, it includes recommendations and decisions. Decisions are binding resolutions, while recommendations are non-binding. A resolution is binding when it is capable of creating obligations on those to whom it is addressed⁸⁵ and when it is based on Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. The resolutions related to children associated with armed forces and armed groups are not legally binding.

International standards

International standards and principles are based on an international legal framework that regulates the obligations of the State towards its citizens and other persons in that State. The main International Standard related to CAAFAG is the Paris Principles.

International standards that have been endorsed by States in one form or another but are not legally binding are referred to as “soft” law. In other words, they cannot trigger State responsibility. Nevertheless, they are considered as morally binding, they represent a commitment of the signatory States, and they provide important guidance.⁸⁶

Here are some of the main international laws and standards relevant to children associated with armed forces and armed groups.



84 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and armed conflict. The mandate of the Special Representative. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/about/the-mandate/> (Consulted in February 2021)

85 Marko Divac Oberg (2006)

86 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019)

Type of international law/norm	Relevant bodies of law/norms (not exhaustive)	Comments	Country ratification and application decree: (name of the country) *
International Legal Framework			
International Humanitarian Law (IHL)	<p>The Four Geneva Conventions (GC) (1949) Geneva conventions I and II are related to the sick and wounded Geneva Convention III is related to prisoners of war Geneva Convention IV is related to the protection of civilians</p> <p>Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions (1977)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional protocol I (API): applicable to international armed conflicts • Additional protocol II (APII): applicable to non-international armed conflicts 	<p>The four Geneva Conventions are universally ratified.</p> <p>GC IV art 68, para. 4, API art 77 para. 5 and APII art 6, para. 4 prohibit the pronouncement or execution of a death sentence against anyone under 18 at the time of the offence.</p> <p>AP I art 77 to the Geneva Conventions sets out the principle of special protection for children: “Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. The parties to the conflict shall provide them with the care and aid they require, whether because of their age or for any other reason.” States should take all feasible measures to prevent children under 15 from taking a direct part in hostilities. These provisions apply to both international and internal conflicts.</p> <p>AP II art 4 stipulates that: “Children shall be provided with the care and aid they require,” lists special measures devoted only to children and that states shall take legislative measures to prohibit the recruitment of children under 15 and their participation in internal conflicts.</p> <p>Art 4(3)(d) specifies that captured children i.e. detained children are entitled to special protection.</p> <p>Additional information can be found in the Legal Protection of Children in Armed Conflict factsheet</p>	
	<p>Customary IHL Law – Rules relevant to child recruitment and use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rule 120: Accommodation of children deprived of their liberty • Rule 135: Children • Rule 136: Recruitment of child soldiers • Rule 137: Participation of Child Soldiers in Hostilities 	<p>The ICRC has identified the following three customary IHL rules that are particularly relevant to child recruitment and use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rule 120: Children in detention should be separated from adults • Rule 135: Children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special respect and protection • Rule 136: Children must not be recruited into armed forces or armed groups • Rule 137: Children must not be allowed to take part in hostilities 	

87 ILO. Children associated with armed forces and armed groups. <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Armedconflict/lang--en/index.htm> (Consulted in February 2021)

* Add the name of your country and check whether the State has ratified the relevant legal and normative instruments and adopted application decrees if relevant.

Type of international law/norm	Relevant bodies of law/norms (not exhaustive)	Comments	Country ratification and application decree: (name of the country) *	
International Human Rights Law (IHRL)	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)	Although not a binding treaty, it is generally held to be the foundation of IHRL		
	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989) The Convention on the Rights of the Child is considered by many to have achieved jus cogens status as it has been ratified by all countries but one. The CRC is at a minimum customary international law due to almost universal support.	Relevant CRC articles Article 1 Definition of a child Article 2 Non discrimination Article 3 Best interest of the child Article 6 Right to life Article 12 Right to participation Article 20 Protection of children without families Article 37 Prohibition of torture and the deprivation of liberty Article 38 The protection of children in armed conflict Article 39 Recovery and social reintegration Article 40 Treatment in the juvenile justice system		
	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) (2000)	The Protocol prohibits: Article 1 The recruitment of anyone under 18 into armed forces to take direct part in hostilities Article 2 The compulsory recruitment of anyone under 18 into national forces Article 4 The recruitment and use in hostilities of anyone under 18 into armed groups		
	ILO Conventions 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)	Article 3 It defines forced and compulsory recruitment of children in armed conflict as one of the worst forms of child labour. ⁸⁷		
	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)	The Convention requires states to take effective measures to prevent torture in any territory under their jurisdiction and forbids states to transport people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured.		
	CRC General Comment No. 24 (2019) Children's rights in the child justice system	The General Comment provides leading principles of comprehensive policy on child justice system		
	Regional human rights instruments			Article 22.2 of the African Charter prohibits that any child takes part in hostilities and is recruited. The African charter on the rights and welfare of the child is legally binding countries which have ratified it. The general comments to art 22 include specific protection of CAAFAG including prevention of detention, trial in specialized child justice systems and support for reintegration.
	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare the Child (1999)			
	General Comment on Art 22 of the African Children's Charter			
		Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)		

Type of international law/norm	Relevant bodies of law/norms (not exhaustive)	Comments	Country ratification and application decree: (name of the country) *
International Human Rights Law (IHRL)	<p>The Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth (2005)</p> <p>Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam (2005), adopted by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)</p> <p>ASEAN Human Right Declaration (2012)</p>	<p>Article 11.4 of the protocol on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa prohibits any child, especially girls, from taking part in hostilities and being recruited as a soldier.</p>	
International Refugee Law (IRL)	<p>The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)</p> <p>Protocol relating to the Status of Refugee (1967)</p> <p>African Union's Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009)</p> <p>African Union Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1974)</p>	<p>The unlawful recruitment or use of children is a form of persecution that may justify the granting of refugee status.</p>	
International Criminal Law (ICL)	<p>The Four Geneva Conventions (1949)</p> <p>Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions (1977)</p> <p>The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)</p> <p>Universal Jurisdiction Laws</p>	<p>Convention I, article on Grave breaches Convention II, article 51 Grave breaches Convention III, article 130 Grave breaches Convention IV, article 147 Grave breaches Additional protocol I, article 11 protection of persons Additional protocol I, article 85 repression of breaches of this protocol</p> <p>Article 8 of the Rome Statute War crimes 2. b) (xxvi) states that conscripting or enlisting children under 15 years into national armed forces or groups or using them to take an active part in all kinds of hostilities, is a war crime.</p>	
International Counter-terrorism Law	<p>General Assembly resolution 75/291 on the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy Review (2021)</p>	<p>The strategy is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. The General Assembly reviews the Strategy every two years, making it a living document attuned to Member States' counter-terrorism priorities.</p> <p>Article 18 reiterates that children accused of or recognized as having infringed the law should be treated according to international law, in particular according to the CRC. It also urges Member States to take relevant measures to effectively reintegrate children formerly associated with armed groups, including terrorist groups.</p> <p>Article 44 calls upon member states to prevent recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters, including children.</p>	

Type of international law/norm	Relevant bodies of law/norms (not exhaustive)	Comments	Country ratification and application decree: (name of the country) *
Security Council legal framework			
UN Security Council Resolutions	<p>UN Security Council Resolutions on Children in armed conflict 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1373 (2001), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012), 2143 (2014), 2225 (2015), 2427 (2018)</p> <p>UN Security Council Resolutions on Maintenance of international peace and security 2250 (2015)</p>	<p>1261: protection of children during conflict and peace negotiations</p> <p>1314: ensure full and safe access of humanitarian personnel</p> <p>1373: ensure that all States refrain from supporting entities or persons involved in terrorist acts, including by suppressing the recruitment of members of terrorist groups</p> <p>1379: discourage corporate actors from maintaining commercial relationships with parties to the conflict</p> <p>1460: highlight the consideration of the specific needs of girls</p> <p>1539: emphasize the inclusion of children in DDR process</p> <p>1612: set up of the Council's Working group on Children and Armed Conflict and the Monitoring Reporting Mechanism</p> <p>1882: set up of action plan with parties to the conflict</p> <p>1998: action against parties listed for multiple violations</p> <p>2068: increase pressure on perpetrators of violence and abuse against children</p> <p>2143: no impunity for perpetrators of war crimes against children</p> <p>2225: security sector reform to mainstream child protection</p> <p>2427: prevention of recruitment, early warning signs, treatment primarily as victims, handover protocols and alternatives to judicial proceedings for detained children</p> <p>2250: youth participation in peacebuilding</p>	
International Standards and Principles			
International standards (soft law)	<p>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</p> <p>Paris Commitments to Protect Children Unlawfully Recruited or Used by Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2007)</p>	<p>Target 8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.</p> <p>Target 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children.</p> <p>The Paris Principles supersede the Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa that were established in 1997.</p>	

Type of international law/norm	Relevant bodies of law/norms (not exhaustive)	Comments	Country ratification and application decree: (name of the country) *
International standards (soft law)	Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2007)	The “Paris Commitments” lay out detailed guidelines for protecting children from recruitment and for providing assistance to those already involved with armed groups or forces. They complement the political and legal mechanisms already in place at the UN Security Council, the International Criminal Court and other bodies trying to protect children from exploitation and violence.	
	Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (2017)	The Vancouver principles prioritize the prevention of recruitment and use of children and support the identification of and response to early warning signs.	
	<p>Rules relevant to child justice systems</p> <p>“The Beijing Rules” for the administration of juvenile justice (1985)</p> <p>“The Tokyo Rules” for non-custodial measures (1990)</p> <p>“The Riyadh Guidelines” for the prevention of juvenile delinquency (1990)</p> <p>“The Havana Rules” for the protection of Juvenile Deprived of their Liberty (1990)</p> <p>The Bangkok Rules” for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (2010)</p>	<p>The Beijing Rules affirm member States’ commitments to “endeavour to develop conditions that will ensure for the juvenile a meaningful life in the community, which, during that period in life when she or he is most susceptible to deviant behaviour, will foster a process of personal development and education that is as free from crime and delinquency as possible.”</p> <p>The Tokyo Rules are intended to promote greater community involvement in the management of criminal justice, specifically in the treatment of offenders, as well as to promote among offenders a sense of responsibility towards society.</p> <p>The Riyadh Guidelines affirm the importance of the part which reducing juvenile delinquency plays on reducing crime, the necessity of implementing the guidelines according to a child-centred approach, and the communal responsibility for children’s well-being as from the earliest possible age.</p> <p>The Havana Rules establish minimum standards for juveniles under arrest or awaiting trial and the management of juvenile facilities.</p> <p>The Bangkok Rules gives attention to the impact of parental detention and imprisonment on children and promotes good practices.</p>	
	The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998)	The Guideline Principles state that in no circumstances shall displaced children be recruited nor be required or permitted to take part in hostilities	
	The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019).	Standard 11 Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups	

Type of international law/norm	Relevant bodies of law/ norms (not exhaustive)	Comments	Country ratification and application decree: (name of the country) *
International standards relating to the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence	Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of IHRL and Serious Violations of IHL (2005) UN General Assembly Resolution 60/147	The purpose of the Resolution is to assist victims and their representatives to access their right to reparation and to guide and encourage States in implementing public policies on reparations.	
	UN Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on the UN approach to Transitional Justice (2010)	This note provides the guiding principles and framework for transitional justice processes and mechanisms. It outlines key components of transitional justice, and ways to further strengthen these activities.	
	UN Economic and Social Council, Updated Set of Principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity, E/CN4./2005/102/Add.1 (2005)	This updated report highlights the principles of the victims' right to know, right to justice and right to reparation.	
	United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence Against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	The Model Strategies were adopted by the General Assembly through resolution 69/194. Paragraph 14 (a) calls for specific prevention measures to prevent the recruitment, use and victimization of children by criminal groups, terrorist entities or violent extremist groups.	

How does international law apply to the signatory States?

There are two principal systems. The *dualist* and the *monist*.

The dualists consider international law and municipal law as separate, and municipal law can apply international law only when it has been incorporated into municipal law. Incorporation can result from an act of parliament or other political act, or given effect by the courts. England is an example of the dualist model of international law. A treaty has no effect in English domestic law, unless it is incorporated into English Law.

The monists consider international law and municipal law as parts of a single legal system. According to this system, municipal law is subservient to international law. The Netherlands legal system is an example of a monist model. International law operates automatically within the national legal system.

There are some countries, such as the United States, where there is a hybrid model. Some treaties are considered municipal law, but not all of them.⁸⁸

As a result, it is important to identify which model country applies, to know how the various legal instruments are enforced in each context and if international law takes precedence over national law.

In some countries, international law is complemented with national law that prohibits the recruitment and use of children. It does not necessarily prevent recruitment, however it provides legal instruments to prosecute recruiters. Below are two examples of how national law may contribute to the prevention of recruitment.

⁸⁸ UN. International Law and national Frameworks. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/discom101.htm> (Consulted in February 2021)

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

DRC is a monist country, however, a number of texts of law that prohibit the recruitment of children complements the international legal framework.

This includes:

- The military legal code (Law No 023/2002) that prohibits the recruitment of children below 18 in armed forces
- The Law 066 decree from the 9th of June 2000 that considers forced recruitment of children in armed forces as a worst form of child labour⁸⁹
- The law of the 10th of January 2009 article 53 on child protection prohibits the recruitment of children in armed forces and armed groups. The law provides for 20 years of imprisonment for the recruitment of children.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, the Child Act article 31(1) signed in 2008 stipulates that the minimum age of compulsory and voluntary military recruitment is 18 as well as for the recruitment by other armed actors, including militias.⁹⁰

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 3 - The Legal and Normative Framework & Annex

How does international law apply to children associated with armed forces and armed groups?

Based on the signature of the relevant legal instruments, the system selected in each country (monist or dualist), and the incorporation into a municipal law for dualist States, the following paragraphs may or may not apply.

Children associated with armed forces and armed groups should be considered as victims by international and national jurisdictions and should not be subjected to criminal proceedings.⁹¹ If children are accused of crimes under national or international law, prosecution should be regarded as a measure of last resort, and the purpose of any sentence should be to rehabilitate and reintegrate the child into the society. The CRC Article 40(3)(b) requires that States should seek alternatives to judicial proceedings for children at the national level such as “care, guidance and supervision orders, counselling, probation, foster care, education and vocational training programmes.”⁹²

Detention of children

International Armed Conflict

In the case of international armed conflict, IHL allows the internment of prisoners of war (POWs) as well as civilians for reasons of imperative security. POWs are “combatants” captured by the opposite party. A “combatant” is a member of the armed forces of a party to a conflict, who has « the right to participate directly in hostilities ». As such, a POW may not be prosecuted by their captor for lawful acts of violence committed during the hostilities but they can be tried and punished for violation of IHL or other serious international crimes. A child may become a POW if he or she is a combatant above 15.

The detention of POWs in regular prisons is forbidden⁹³ and POWs must be released and repatriated “without delay following the cessation of hostilities.”⁹⁴ Under IHL, children who have been detained as POWs must be held in quarters separate from adult detainees, except where accommodated with adult family members. They also benefit from special protection. (See paragraph on Detention). In practice, child POWs are very rare and no cases have been registered since the Second World War.

Non-international armed conflicts

Children associated with armed forces and armed groups who surrender or are captured in non-international armed conflicts are not considered POWs nor combatants, as the status of POW does not exist in NIAC.

Common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions applies to children in detention in a NIAC. The Additional Protocol II art 4 and 5 apply to detention and imprisonment of children in conflicts to which they apply, however they do not contain the relevant procedural safeguards for children. In most cases of detention in non-international armed conflict, human rights law and national law may provide some or all of the protection needed.⁹⁵

Article 37(b) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Article 9 of the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) both provide that children shall not be deprived of liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. Detention is recognised as legitimate in some circumstances, but only if it is “lawful” under national law, and if some procedural guarantees for children are put in place.⁹⁶ In addition, detention must not be “arbitrary”, but necessary and proportionate to the end sought.

89 Baro (2005)

90 US Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2016)

91 UN Security Council Resolution 2427 paras 19-21; UNSCR 2427 OP 21; Paris Principles Art 3.6, and CRC General Comment 24.

92 UN. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 40 3. b1989

93 Article 22 Geneva Convention III

94 Article 18 Geneva Convention III.

95 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and armed conflict (2011)

Children who are in contact with the law, should access a fair, specialized and child-friendly justice system. The threshold for demonstrating that detention is necessary and proportionate is higher than for adults, due to the CRC requirement that detention of children must only be used as a measure of last resort, and for the shortest appropriate period.⁹⁷ Alternative measures to detention or diversion should always be preferred.⁹⁸ The best interest of the child must be a primary consideration in the decision whether to place a child in detention,⁹⁹ and if detained, the State should provide the following legal safeguards:

- Civilian-juvenile justice systems must be used for children who have reached the minimum age of criminal responsibility.¹⁰⁰
- No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age.¹⁰¹

Every child alleged to have or accused of having infringed the law must:¹⁰²

- Be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law.
- Be informed promptly and directly of the charges against her/him, and, if appropriate, through her/his parents or legal guardians, and to have legal or other appropriate assistance in the preparation and presentation of her/his defence.
- Have the matter determined without delay by a competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body in a fair hearing according to law, in the presence of legal or other appropriate assistance and, unless it is considered not to be in the best interests of the child, in particular, considering her/his age or situation, her/his parents or legal guardians.

- Be compelled to give testimony or to confess guilt; to examine or have examined adverse witnesses and to get the participation and examination of witnesses on his or her behalf under conditions of equality.
- Have this decision and any measures imposed in consequence thereof reviewed by a higher competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body according to law.
- Have the free assistance of an interpreter if the child cannot understand or speak the language used.
- Have his or her privacy fully respected at all stages of the proceedings
- The right to be informed of the reasons for detention;¹⁰³
- The right to be brought promptly before a judge and to a judicial review of the legality of detention;¹⁰⁴
- The right to release or to a trial within a “reasonable time” where a child is accused of a crime;¹⁰⁵
- The right to have the detention acknowledged by the authorities and to communicate with relatives and friends;¹⁰⁶

Detention should never be used as an alternative to a criminal charge, or where there is insufficient evidence to charge a child with a criminal offence. Neither should it be used for gathering intelligence. Further, detention should “not continue beyond the period for which the State can provide appropriate justification.”¹⁰⁷ If it does, then it will cease to meet the criteria for lawful detention.¹⁰⁸

Children held in detention during armed conflict are some of the most invisible children. Few children have access to a lawyer or are given the reasons why they have been detained. Many are held for long periods of time without charge, and often with no contact with their family. Evidence abounds that such children are particularly vulnerable.

96 Bolanos v. Ecuador, Communication No. 238/1987; United Nations Human Rights Committee, Domukovsky v. Georgia, No. 623, 624, 626 and 627/1995.

97 Article 37(b) CRC

98 Art 37(3)(b) and 37 (4) CRC, Art 6 OPAC on reintegration of child recruits, Paris Principles at 8.9, UNSCR 2427 para 21: 21

99 Article 3 CRC

100 Article 40(3)(a) CRC

101 Article 37 a of CRC;

102 Article 40 2 b (i) to (vii) of CRC, Paris Principles, which raise these standards, UNSCR 2427 paras 19-21

103 Article 9(2) of ICCPR. See also Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 8 (1982). The Human Rights Committee noted that

while this requirement appears only to apply to persons charged with a criminal offence, it also applies to persons held in administrative detention.

104 Article 37(d) of CRC; Article 9(4) of ICCPR.

105 Article 9 (3) of ICCPR.

106 Article 1 of International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, 2006; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 29 (2001), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.11, para. 13(b).

107 A. v. Australia, 1997, para. 9.4; C. v. Australia, Communication No. 900/1999 2002, para. 8.2.

108 A. v. Australia, 1997

Criminal prosecution

In international armed conflicts, a child combatant can be brought before a tribunal for the alleged commission of war crimes, such as killing civilians, looting and burning villages, and rape or other forms of sexual violence.

In situations of non-international armed conflict, States can prosecute children for acts regarded as crimes in national or international law while being associated with armed forces or armed groups. This should, however, remain a measure of last resort and judicial safeguards should be provided. The best interest of the child and his or her reintegration into society should at all times be the primary concern.

When a State or one of the international courts considers prosecuting a child, the two key questions are: (1) whether the child has criminal responsibility; and (2) whether the court has jurisdiction to try a case against the child.

Criminal responsibility

The CRC art 40 (3) requires all States to establish a minimum age of criminal responsibility but does not specify the age. However, the Committee on the rights of the child highlights in General Comment No 24 that, based on developmental and neuroscientific evidence, adolescent brains continue to mature well beyond the teenage years, affecting their decision-making. As a result, the Committee commends to States an increase in the age of criminal responsibility to 15 or 16.¹⁰⁹

IHL does not establish a minimum age of criminal responsibility for international crimes. It has been argued, however, that Article 77(2) of Additional Protocol I does in fact set a minimum age for war crimes at 15 years old. This conclusion is based on the idea that this Article, which now forms part of customary IHL, sets the minimum age for recruitment into armed forces or armed groups, and the active participation in hostilities at 15. However, the text itself makes no direct reference to a minimum age of criminal responsibility of child soldiers.¹¹⁰

The Paris Principles provide that “children who are accused of crimes under international law allegedly committed while they were associated with armed forces or armed groups, should be considered primarily as victims and not as perpetrators.” If a prosecution goes forward and the child is convicted, both the Paris

Principles and the CRC require that “the purpose of any sanction imposed on a child should be to promote rehabilitation and reintegration into the community and not to punish.”

International court

Under ICL and according to the decisions of the international criminal court such as in the case of Thomas Lubanga or in the case of Bosco Ntaganda, children recruited and used by armed groups during an armed conflict should be considered as victims of war and should not be prosecuted.¹¹¹ In addition, the International Criminal Court has no jurisdiction to try any person who was under the age of 18 when the crime was committed.¹¹²

National court

If a child is to be prosecuted in a domestic court for the alleged commission of a crime under national or international law, several judicial safeguards should be put in place ([See Detention section](#)) and that international standards, including the CRC (signed by all States but USA) apply.

International law places restrictions on the types of sentences that may be imposed by a State, a national criminal court, a military tribunal or a State executive body, such as the police or the military:

- Capital punishment of children is prohibited in all circumstances,¹¹³ as is the imposition of life imprisonment without the possibility of release;¹¹⁴
- Any form of corporal punishment as a sentence would constitute degrading treatment contrary to article 37 of the CRC;¹¹⁵
- Sentences that may involve torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment may not be ordered.¹¹⁶

Limitations to the prosecution

The Paris Principles and the UN resolution 2427 call for prosecution of these children as a matter of last resort. Although not legally binding, they reflect the commitment of signatory States to end recruitment of children and their use in hostilities.

109 Committee on the right of the child (2019)

110 Happold (2005)

111 UNODC (2019)

112 ICC. Understanding the International Criminal Court.

113 Article 37(a), CRC; Article 6(5) ICCPR; Rule 17.2 Beijing Rules.

114 Article 37(a), CRC; CRC, General Comment No 10, para. 77

115 Article 40(3)(a) CRC

116 Article 7 of ICCPR; Article 37(1) of CRC; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 39/46 of 10 December 1984.

117 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and armed conflict (2011)

118 UNODC (2019)

119 Watchlist (2020)

Paris Principles

- Article 8.7 Children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups should not be prosecuted or punished or threatened with prosecution or punishment solely for their membership of those forces or groups
- Article 3.6 and 3.7 Children who are accused of crimes under international law allegedly committed while they were associated with armed forces and armed groups should be considered primarily as victims, not as perpetrators. These children should be treated with rehabilitation in mind and alternatives to judicial proceedings should be sought wherever possible, with the consequences that justice measures are a measure of last resort.

UN Resolution 2427

- Article 19 Children who commits acts of terrorism should be handed over to child protection actors
- Article 20 CAAFAG should be treated as victims of violations of international law
- Article 21 Members States should consider alternatives to prosecution and detention

Article 40 of the CRC encourages States to find appropriate and effective ways for dealing with children in conflict with the law without resorting to judicial proceedings. Rather than using purely punitive approaches, alternative methods may contribute to reparation and reconciliation, and may prevent relapse in the future. Complementing the CRC, the OPAC stipulates that States should support and provide assistance to former child soldiers in order to reintegrate into their families and communities. However, it is often in the child's best interest to understand the moral consequences of their actions. This can be best achieved through the use of restorative justice mechanisms and local community-based programmes. Such initiatives seek to recognise actions which have been perpetrated under command of adults, but also support the child in becoming an effective member of the community. Such measures focus on reintegration and rehabilitation, rather than punishment.¹¹⁷

It may include:

- Education or vocational training aimed at preventing relapse;
- Repair of harms done or restitution of losses suffered;
- Community service for the most vulnerable in society.

Complementary reading:

- [Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and armed conflict. Working paper n°3 Children and Justice During and in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict. September 2011](#)

How does international law apply to children associated with armed groups designated as terrorists?

International legal frameworks and norms apply the same way to children associated with armed groups designated as terrorists. As a result, according to ICL, children recruited and exploited by violent extremist and terrorist groups during an armed conflict who were recruited before the age of 15 should be considered as victims of war.¹¹⁸

Children who participated directly in hostilities and who are captured should benefit from the protection of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention and be treated with humanity, protected from killing, torture and cruel treatments. Children who are below 15 should benefit from special protection according to the Additional Protocol II including education, family reunification, evacuation from conflict zones. All children detained should benefit from protection according to the CRC, including age-appropriate treatment, and dedicated juvenile justice rehabilitation centres. In addition, the Paris Principles and all other international norms protect all children associated with armed forces and armed groups, including children associated with armed groups designated as terrorists.

Girls and boys should not be detained or prosecuted solely for their suspected association with or membership of designated terrorist groups and in contexts where designated terrorist groups are operating. In addition, children should not be detained or prosecuted for crimes committed by family members. Many children come into contact with armed groups, including groups listed as terrorist by the UN through family links but it should not be assumed that these children are members of the groups or have carried out acts to support these groups, and such a determination should be made on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of their status vis-à-vis groups designated as terrorists, all children have a right to receive humanitarian assistance without discrimination and according to the humanitarian principles.¹¹⁹

However, in practice they are often treated differently according to their active or indirect participation in hostilities.

International law

The victimization of children, together with their developmental characteristics and specific vulnerabilities, are recognized as justifying limitations to their prosecutions.

For instance, in the case of child victims of trafficking, there is a principle of non-punishment of offenses directly connected or related to the trafficking situation they have experienced. The trafficking framework is especially relevant, as many children have been trafficked for the purposes of exploitation by terrorist and violent extremist groups.¹²⁰

When children associated with armed groups designated as terrorists have committed serious violations, customary law prioritizes adults and does not prosecute children below 18. The International Criminal Court applying the Rome Statute is not competent to prosecute minors. However, it does not prevent national courts of countries who are not signatory of the Rome Statute from prosecuting them. Common article 3 of the Geneva Convention applies regardless of active or indirect participation to hostilities. Therefore, children who indirectly participated in hostilities benefit from the same guarantees of the Geneva Convention and IHL.¹²¹

Competent court

The Universal counter terrorism instruments do not determine which court within a State should be competent to adjudicate on terrorist acts. States often introduce different models for the prosecution and adjudication of terrorism offences. For example, some States have created specialist terrorist courts or specialized investigatory and judicial authorities. However, specialized justice systems should not be competing. Children's cases should always remain within the specialized system for children in coordination with terrorism-related offence specialized justice systems.

[The Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context](#), developed by the Global Counterterrorism Forum, provides 13 good practices for Governments and justice professionals to consider when dealing with children as follows:

1. Address children alleged to be involved in terrorism-related activities in accordance with international law and in line with international juvenile justice standards
2. Assess and address the situation of children in a terrorism-related context from a child rights and child development perspective
3. Address children's vulnerability to recruitment and/or radicalization to violence through preventive measures
4. Develop targeted prevention strategies with a strong focus on the creation of networks to support children at risk

¹²⁰ UNODC. (2019)

¹²¹ Baulieu (2020)

5. Address children prosecuted for terrorism-related offenses primarily through the juvenile justice system
6. Apply the appropriate international juvenile justice standards to terrorism cases involving children even in cases that are tried in adult courts
7. Consider and design diversion mechanisms for children charged with terrorism-related offenses
8. Consider, and apply where appropriate, alternatives to arrest, detention, and imprisonment, including during the pre-trial stage and always give preference to the least restrictive means to achieve the aim of the judicial process
9. Apply the principle of individualization and proportionality in sentencing
10. Hold children deprived of their liberty in appropriate facilities; support, protect, and prepare them for reintegration
11. Develop rehabilitation and reintegration programs for children involved in terrorism-related activities to aid their successful return to society
12. Design and implement specialized programs for terrorism cases to enhance the capacity of all the professionals involved in the juvenile justice system
13. Design and implement monitoring and evaluation programs to ensure the effective implementation of international juvenile justice standards

Besides the international legal framework, it is crucial to document the national legal framework, which treaties have been ratified and enforced, what is the national legal framework related to children associated with armed forces and armed groups and national counterterrorism law if applicable.

Complementary reading:

- [UNODC \(2019\) Justice for Children in the Context of Counter-Terrorism: A training manual](#)
- [UNODC \(2017\) Handbook on children recruited and Exploited by terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups the Role of the justice system](#)
- [Watchlist. Countering Terrorism and Violent extremism: The Erosion of Children's Rights in Armed Conflict. Policy Note January 2020](#)
- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 28 - Recruitment of Children by Armed Groups Designated as Terrorist Groups

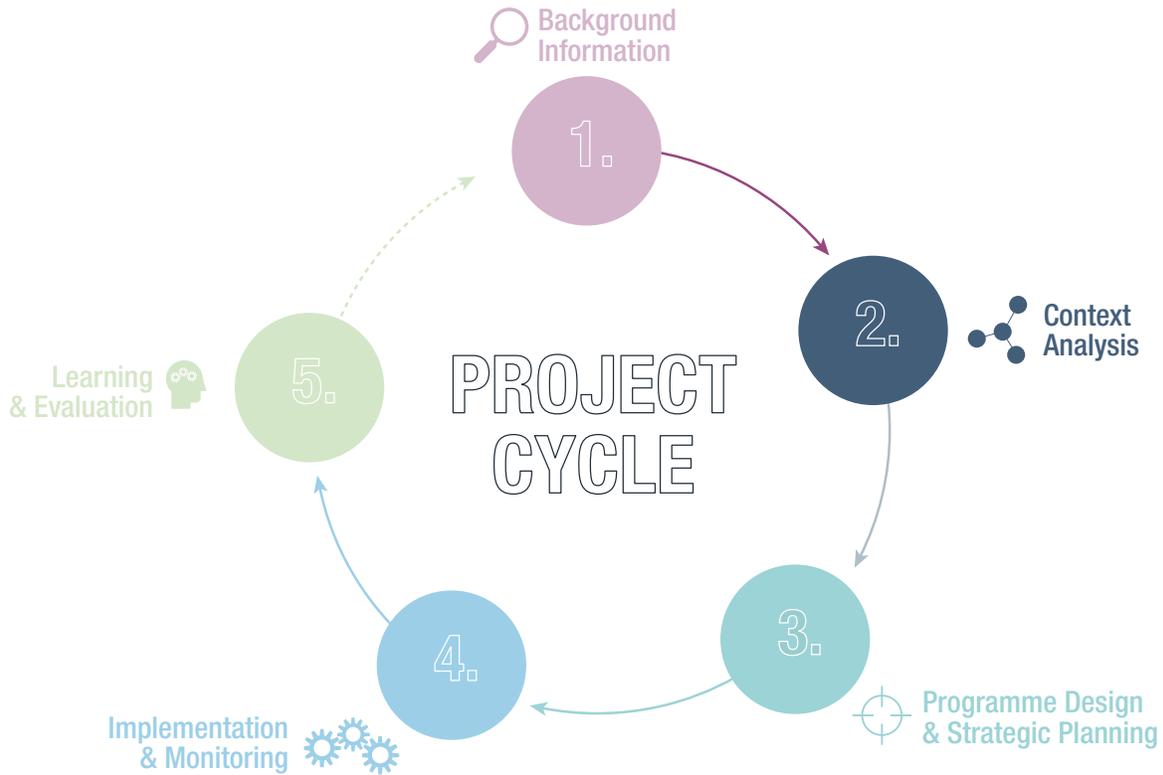


2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS



CAAFAG

Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines



1.

Context Analysis

- A. Introduction to CAAFAG
- B. Legal and Normative Framework

- A. Research Questions and Scope
 - Research Questions
 - Scope
- B. Methodology Selection
 - Desk review
 - Risk assessment
 - Needs assessment
 - Consultation of former CAAFAG
 - Gender analysis
 - Stakeholder analysis
- C. Timeline
- D. Human Resources
- E. Budget

3.

- A. Programme Design
- B. Monitoring
- C. Human Resources
- D. Budget

4.

- A. Child Safeguarding
- B. Data Protection
- C. Monitoring
- D. Human Resources
- E. Coordination

5.

- A. Generating & Documenting Learning
- B. Evaluation

Phase 1.
PLANNING

PROCESS

Phase 2.
GETTING READY

Phase 3.
IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing a context analysis is a key step in quality programme development. The context analysis corresponds to the steps 1) Preparedness and 2) Needs assessment and situation analysis of Standard 4: Programme Cycle Management of the Minimum Standard for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. The information collected will inform the design of CAAFAG programmes. The more quality information is collected from multiple sources and using diverse methods, the better quality the programme design will likely be. The context analysis can be implemented by one organization, or preferably by multiple field practitioners and coordinated by the Child Protection Working Group at national level, or at regional level. It involves NGOs, UN agencies, CBOs, government actors working with CAAFAG, as well as other sectors as relevant.

The context analysis includes 3 phases outlined below:

1. **Planning:** defining the goal and scope of the context analysis, the data collection plan, the timeline and budget for implementation.
2. **Getting ready:** selecting and adapting data collection tools and training of data collectors.
3. **Implementation:** collecting, coding and analysing data.



Objective

The context analysis will contribute to a better understanding of the current situation of recruitment, use, release and reintegration of children in a given location. The information collected is essential to design quality gender-sensitive programmes that respond to the needs of CAAFAG, without doing further harm.

Key principles

The context analysis includes three key principles: do no harm, child participation, and gender and age sensitivity.

Do no harm Working with children associated with armed forces and armed groups can expose staff, parents and children to risks. Children may be arrested if identified as a former CAAFAG; family members, including boys and girls may be a target for retaliation or discrimination. Involving children in data collection can also potentially expose them to safeguarding risks, lead to disclosure of violence and abuse, cause distress and anxiety or lead

to disappointment if their expectations are not met. Field practitioners should assess potential harms and benefits to children if they participate in data collection¹²⁵ and risk mitigation measures. The risk should be balanced with the risk of programming blind without taking into consideration the needs of children. Data collectors collecting information from children should have experience working with children such as caseworkers, child protection officers, youth club facilitators trained in child safeguarding. Additional training on how to communicate with children and close supervision can compensate for the lack of experience with children. A referral pathway should also be in place in case of disclosure during data collection or signs of distress. The risk analysis provides the tools to conduct this assessment and identify mitigation measures including at minimum staff training on child safeguarding and age and gender sensitive data collection. (See Phase 2 – E. Training)

Child participation Every data collection tool includes the participation of children, boys and girls, including CAAFAG. Participation of children is not only their right, but their opinions are critical to contribute to more relevant responses. They know best what they need and how these needs can be addressed. Experience shows that not engaging with at-risk children, particularly girls, often leads to incorrect assumptions that will limit programme reach and impact¹²⁶ and that may do harm. Participating in consultation can give children a sense of control over the situation and agency, particularly for girls, to contribute to their own recovery¹²⁷.

The participation of children should be voluntary and require prior **informed consent** from the child and from her/his parents, caregivers or other relevant gatekeepers such as husband, or community leaders. You will find a sample of informed consent script in each tool that can be adapted.

Gender and age sensitivity: Data collection should be gender and age sensitive. This includes equal representation of women and men, girls and boys in focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and during workshops. Every data collection approach should be conducted with female and male groups separately and with same sex data collectors or facilitators when culturally relevant. Specific tools are designed for adults and for children, often shorter for children. Data should be disaggregated by sex and age, using the following age groups: 0-5, 6-11, 12-17 (children) and 18+ (adults). Every data collector should be trained on gender sensitization.

¹²⁵ Graham (2013)

¹²⁶ Claessens (2016)

¹²⁷ Plan International (2020)



PHASE 1 – PLANNING

The planning phase of the context analysis will contribute to defining the goal and scope of the context analysis, data collection plan, human resources needed, and establish a timeline and budget for implementation.



A. Research questions and scope

The objective of the context analysis is to answer a series of questions that will drive the planning process. This will help to determine the purpose of the context analysis and how the data collected will be used.



The Research questions

At the start of the planning exercise, it is key to define (collectively, if relevant) the questions you seek to answer with the context analysis.

The first questions to ask yourselves are:

- What is the main problem?
- What can we do to address this problem?

Once you have answered these two questions, you can go more in depth with more specific questions. These specific questions will guide the process, the scope and the selection of relevant methodologies and tools.

Here is a list of suggested questions. You can select questions from the list below, reword, or add questions.

Programme risks

1. What are the risks organizations may face implementing a CAAFAG project in this location?
2. What are the risks former CAAFAG boys and girls may face implementing a project in this location? Are any faced particularly by boys or by girls?
3. What are the mitigation measures to mitigate the risks?

Prevention

4. Who are the armed groups and armed forces recruiting?
5. What are the processes of recruitment of boys and girls, who is involved in the decision making, are there differences according to their age or gender?
6. What are the risk and protective factors for recruitment of boys and for girls, are there differences according to their age and gender?
7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls?

Release

8. What are the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls during the period of association, are there differences according to their age/gender/ ethnicity or other characteristics?
9. How are boys and girls released (formal vs informal modes of release), are there differences according to their age/ gender/ ethnicity or other characteristics?
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls?

Reintegration

11. What are the challenges and risks faced by boys and girls during their reintegration at the individual, family, community and society levels, are there differences according to their age or gender?
12. How can the humanitarian community contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?
13. What are the criteria of a successful reintegration for boys and girls (status, relationships) and what is needed to achieve it?
14. How do access to and control of resources impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?
15. How do safety concerns impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?
16. How do social and cultural norms for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?

The scope

Defining the scope of the context analysis will help to determine the size and depth of the context analysis that field practitioners want to undertake.

Geographic scope – What is the geographic area of interest? Will data collection be in one single location, or in multiple locations? If it covers a large geographic area, such as a district or region, consider the selection of representative communities where recruitment is believed to be happening.

Population scope – What populations are relevant for the proposed programming (e.g., clients, recipient communities, conflict-affected communities)? What groups of people should be asked to participate in data collection? Which ethnic group or nationality are they from? What are their ages? How are we including diverse perspectives?

Consider the following gender and age groups:

- Girls 0-5
- Boys 0-5
- Girls 6-11
- Boys 6-11
- Girls 12-17
- Boys 12-17
- Women (above 18)
- Men (above 18)

B. Methodology selection

The context analysis includes the following methodologies: desk review, risk assessment, needs assessment, consultation with CAAFAG, gender analysis and stakeholder analysis. Each component includes tools such as key informant interviews, household survey, focus group discussion questionnaires or workshop. Based on the research questions, the scope and the desk review (see below), you will need to select relevant methodologies.

Context Analysis Methodologies



Desk review

The first step is to conduct a desk review in order to know what information already exists and what additional information you will need to collect.

The objective of the desk review is to collect existing data that could feed into the context analysis. The desk review will prevent practitioners from re-collecting data that has been already collected, and thus contributing to assessment fatigue. Likewise, it will help reduce the costs and timeframe and thus be more efficient with targeted data collection.

Data collection

The desk review includes research, MRM reports, needs assessments from selected location(s), CAAFAG projects evaluations, existing gender analysis, UN, government and NGO reports about the conflict/situation, movements of population, socio-economic context, the level of access to services, protection risks of civilians and of minority groups, and any other relevant information to the context. Not all sources are created equal, and you may need to weigh the findings based on the quality of the source.

A desk review report will organise the data collected around the research questions selected. Some questions may be more documented than others. This will inform the selection of methodologies and data collection tools to collect data on missing information.



Risk assessment

The objective of the risk assessment is to assess the risks to implementing CAAFAG programmes. Working with CAAFAG in a conflict setting can be highly sensitive and may expose the organisation and the beneficiaries to risks that should be identified and mitigated whenever possible.

More specifically, it will contribute to answering to the following questions:

1. What are the risks organizations may face when implementing a CAAFAG project in this location (in terms of reputation, access, staff security)
2. What are the risks former CAAFAG boys and girls may face implementing a project in this location?
3. What are the mitigation measures to mitigate the risks?

In addition, the risk assessment analysis Excel table can be used to assess the risks of implementing a context analysis. The question to answer would be:

- What are the risk data collectors and participants may face in the implementation of a context analysis and the mitigation measures?

In this case, there are no data collection tools. The assessment is based on the knowledge of staff and the security sector.

Data collection

The risk assessment is implemented through two main tools, key informant interviews (KII) with adults and focus group discussions (FGD) with adults in gender and age segregated groups. Select members of the population who have frequent contact with children and who know about the risks children and their families may face. This may include: teachers; women and youth group leaders; health care practitioners and traditional birth attendants; social workers; shopkeepers; etc. Focus on individuals within the population who have the most insight into the lives of children at risk, marginalised, or isolated.

Each KII and FGD should not last more than 1 hour. In each location, you will need to conduct at least 2 FGD (1 with men and 1 with women) and 4 KII (2 with men and two with women). ([See the sample of data collection plan Phase 2 – A. Data collection plan](#))



Focus group discussions

The FGD facilitates discussions with community members, regarding the threats and safety issues they perceive for children who were formerly associated with armed forces/armed groups and their families, to inform a potential humanitarian response. The questions are used as guidance to lead the discussion on general safety concerns for children, gradually and where deemed appropriate, steering the conversation towards safety concerns, stigma and risks for children formerly associated with armed forces/armed groups.



Tools:

Risk Assessment – Focus Group Discussion Adults



Key informant interview

The KII is used to facilitate an individual interview with adult men and women in the community who have a particular vantage point of the situation and who have broad information on the risks children face in the community.



Tool:

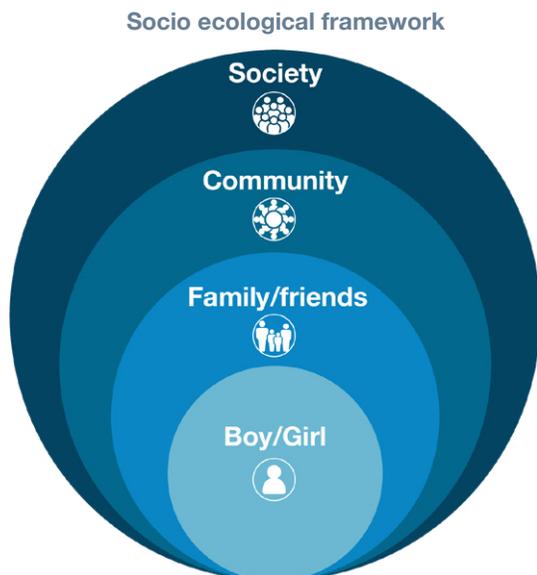
Risk Assessment - Key Informant Interview Adult





Needs assessment

The objective of the needs assessment is to have an overview of the scale of recruitment and the needs of girls and boys at all levels of the socio-ecological framework. The socio-ecological framework includes the individual, family and peers, community and societal levels based on the diagram below.



The needs assessment includes a rapid assessment and a comprehensive assessment.

The data collected will contribute to responding to the following questions:

- The scale of recruitment and use
- 4. Who are the armed groups and armed forces recruiting?
- 5. What are the processes of recruitment of boys and girls, who are involved in the decision making, are there differences according to their age and gender?
- 6. What are the risk and protective factors for recruitment for boys and for girls, are there differences according to their age and gender?
- 7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls?
- 8. What are the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls during the period of association, based on their age and gender?

9. How are boys and girls released (formal vs informal modes of release), are there differences according to their age and gender?
11. What are the challenges and risks faced by boys and girls during their reintegration at the individual, family, community and society levels, are there differences according to their age and gender?
12. How can the humanitarian community contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?

Data collection

The rapid needs assessment is usually conducted at the onset of an emergency to get an overview of the protection risks children face in a given location. It includes a household survey (HHS) on multiple child protection risks, (not just in association with armed forces and armed groups), with adult community members. It can be included in a Child Protection Rapid Needs Assessment (CPRA) if no CPRA has been implemented yet. These additional questions for a standard CPRA are useful in a context where there is already suspicion of recruitment that needs to be confirmed.

The HHS should not last more than 20 min and can be administered through a randomized door-to-door campaign. The sampling should be determined in each context based on the total number of inhabitants in a given location. ([See the sample of data collection plan, including sampling methodology Phase 2 – A. Data collection plan](#))



Household survey

The HSS is used to facilitate individual interviews with adult men and women community members and gather information on the scale and modes of recruitment. The tool provided is focused only on child recruitment. It is recommended to integrate it with a Child Protection Rapid Assessment that includes questions on other relevant child protection issues.



Tool:
Rapid Needs Assessment - Household Survey Adults

The comprehensive needs assessment is implemented through KII with adults and gender segregated focus group discussions (FGD) with 15-17 years old children and adults. KII may contribute to distil some themes that can



Consultation of former CAAFAG

be further explored during FGD through prompts. Gender specific questionnaires are available for boys and girls, focusing almost only on one gender, in order to collect more in-depth information and reduce the length of the FGD with children. It is preferable to implement both KII and FGD, however, based on the sensitivity of the topic, you may prioritize KII over FGD to avoid tensions. Select members of the population who have frequent contact with children, who know about the risks children and their families may face. This may include teachers; women and youth group leaders; health care practitioners and traditional birth attendants; social workers; shopkeepers; etc. Focus on individuals within the population who have the most insight into the lives of children at risk, marginalised, or isolated.

Each KII and FGD should not last more than 1 hour for adults and 45 min for children.

In each location, you will need to conduct at least 4 FGD (1 with girls, 1 with boys, 1 with men and 1 with women) and 4 KII (2 with men and 2 with women). ([See the sample of data collection plan Phase 2 – A. Data collection plan](#))



Key informant interview

The KII is used to facilitate an individual interview with adult men and women community members and gather information on the modes of recruitment, the reasons for enrolment, the role of CAAFAG during the period of association and the challenges they face upon their return, including any gendered dimensions.



Tool:

Comprehensive Needs Assessment - Key Informant Interview Adults



Focus group discussions

The FGD is used to facilitate discussions with community members (adults and children), regarding the modes of recruitment, the reasons for enrolment, the role of CAAFAG during the period of association and the challenges they face upon their return, including any gendered dimensions.



Tools:

Comprehensive Needs Assessment – Focus Group Discussion Adults

Comprehensive Needs Assessment – Focus Group Discussion Children

The objective of the consultation of former CAAFAG is to get a deeper understanding of the needs of girls and boys CAAFAG, to give them an opportunity to express themselves and to contribute to the design of programmes for CAAFAG and thus design better projects that respond to their needs.

The findings from the workshop will inform project design and prevent further harm from programme interventions.

Prioritize this methodology if do not have a lot of time and resources. It will allow you to collect quickly very precise data.

The data collected will contribute to respond to the following questions:

7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls?
8. What are the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls during the period of association, are there differences according to their age/gender/ ethnicity or other characteristic?
9. How are boys and girls released (formal vs informal modes of release), are there differences according to their age/gender/ ethnicity or other characteristic?
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls?
11. What are the challenges and risks faced by boys and girls during their reintegration at the individual, family, community and society levels, are there differences according to their age or gender?
12. How can the humanitarian community contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?
13. What are the criteria of a successful reintegration for boys and girls (status, relationships) and what is needed to achieve it?

Data collection

The consultation of CAAFAG is conducted through a workshop with boys and girls and/or through a key informant interview. Gathering CAAFAG may not be safe and expose them to harm. In this case, prioritize individual key informant interviews.



Workshop

The workshop is implemented over the course of 3 half days with a series of participatory activities and games. It is recommended to implement activities with gender segregated groups in order to allow boys and girls to express themselves freely. The total number of participants should not exceed 20 young people. This can be done through a mixed gender workshop with gender segregated activities or a gender segregated workshop, with only boys or girls.

The participants are boys and girls aged between 13 and 17 years old who have been associated with armed forces and armed groups and who are currently accessing reintegration services. The service provider should have built a trusting relationship with the children, and the facilitators should be known to the children. Participants can also include older young people above the age of 18 who have benefited from reintegration support in the past few years.

You need 2 facilitators for a group of 20 young people with facilitators of the same sex of the participants. In case of a mixed gender workshop, ensure you have one female and one male facilitator to support group activities. In addition, a data collector will be present to document the results of each activity, as well as a caseworker to provide emotional support if needed.



Tool:

Consultation of former CAAFAG – Workshop session plan



Key Informant Interview

The KII is used to facilitate an individual interview with adolescent boys and girls and to gather information on the risk and protective factors to recruitment, their experience of release, the challenges they face upon their return and their criteria of successful reintegration.

This tool should be used if the organization of workshop with CAAFAG is not feasible or may expose children to harm.



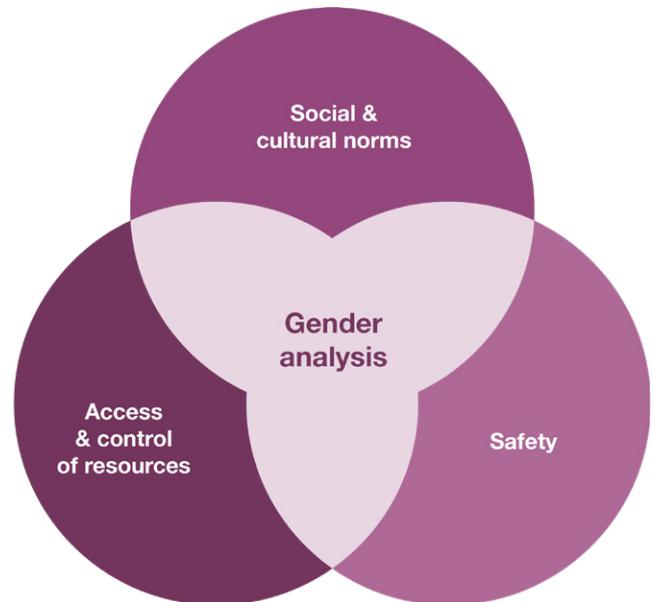
Tool:

Consultation of former CAAFAG – KII children



Gender analysis¹²⁸

The objective of the gender analysis is to collect qualitative information on women/girls and men/boys around four core areas of impact: access and control of resources, social and cultural norms, and safety.



The findings will be used to identify ways to adjust existing projects or design gender-sensitive or gender-transformative CAAFAG projects.

The data collected will contribute to responding to the following questions:

11. What are the challenges and risks faced by boys and girls during their reintegration at the individual, family, community and society levels, are there differences according to their age and gender ?
12. How the humanitarian community can contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?
14. How do access and control of resources impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?
15. How do safety concerns impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?
16. How do social and cultural norms for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?

¹²⁸ The gender analysis is adapted from the IRC Comprehensive Gender Analysis

Data collection

The gender analysis is implemented through FGD and KII in each location with men and women separately and with girls and boys in separate groups. Each FGD and KII should not last more than 1 hour for adults and 45 min for children.

Each FGD is implemented with the Girls Empowerment Star.

In each location, you will need to conduct at least 2 FGD (1 with girls, 1 with boys) and 4 KII (men and 2 with women). ([See the sample of data collection plan Phase 2 – A. Data collection plan](#))

FGD Girls Empowerment Star

The Girls Empowerment Star is a useful tool to understand boys' and girls' perspectives about girls' safety and inclusion in their community and in their home. This tool collects information about safety of girls, access and control of resources through their opportunities of participation and social and cultural norms. It captures both qualitative and quantitative data on the perception of girls and boys, it can also serve as a baseline and can inform programming. It is exclusively used with boys and girls and not with adults.

Tool:

Gender Analysis - Girls Empowerment Star

Key Informant Interview

The KII is used to facilitate an individual interview and gather broad information on each of the Core Areas of Impact with adult community members. It contributes to develop a holistic overview of men and boys' and women and girls' lives in the community, in three core areas: Social and Cultural norms, Access and Control and Safety. Data gathered can be used to identify the larger Social and Cultural Norms that influence and dictate the behaviours, decisions and actions talked about and highlighted through the KII.

Tool:

Gender Analysis – Key Informant Interview adults



Stakeholder analysis

A stakeholder analysis is used to identify the actors and the relationships that will influence project outcomes. It helps to determine the actors to partner and collaborate with. It builds on existing information as well as on data collected through the various methodologies of the context analysis.

The data collected will contribute to analyse the major power centres in the community, know who can influence recruitment, release and reintegration with the aim to respond to the following questions:

7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls?
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from children, families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls?
12. How can the humanitarian community contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?

Data analysis

The stakeholder analysis is implemented through a workshop during which field staff and data collectors organize the data collected to identify key stakeholders.



Workshop

The workshop is implemented during half a day with a series of participatory activities where participants will identify stakeholders to engage with on prevention, release and reintegration. These stakeholders are identified based on their level of influence and their support to CAAFAG. Through the workshop, participants will determine best strategies to engage with each stakeholder.

Tool:

Stakeholder analysis workshop (session plan)

Summary of the data collection tools per methodology



Desk review

- No tools



Risk assessment

- Key informant interview (KII) – Adults
- Focus group discussion (FGD) – Adults



Needs assessment

- Rapid Needs Assessment – Household Survey - Adults
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment – KII Adults
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment – FGD Adults
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment – FGD Children (gender specific KII guiding questions)



CAAFAG consultation

- Workshop session plan - Children
- KII – Children



Gender analysis

- FGD Girls Empowerment Star - Children
- KII Adults



Stakeholder analysis

- Workshop session plan

Methodology selection summary table

Research questions	Desk review	Risk assessment	Needs assessment	Consultation of CAAFAG	Gender analysis	Stakeholder analysis
1. What are the risks staff may face implementing a CAAFAG project in this location?	●	●				
2. What are the risks former CAAFAG boys and girls may face implementing a project in this location?	●	●				
3. What are the mitigation measures to mitigate the risks?	●	●				
4. Who are the armed groups and armed forces recruiting?	●					
5. What are the processes of recruitment of boys and girls, who are involved in the decision making, are there differences according to their age and gender?	●		●			●
6. What are the risk and protective factors for recruitment for boys and for girls, are there differences according to their age and gender?	●		●	●		
7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls?	●		●	●		●
8. What are the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls during the period of association, based on their age and gender?	●		●	●		
9. How are boys and girls released (formal vs informal modes of release), are there differences according to their age and gender?	●		●	●		
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls?	●			●		●
11. What are the challenges and risks faced by boys and girls during their reintegration at the individual, family, community and society levels, are there differences according to their age and gender?	●		●	●	●	
12. How to contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?	●		●	●	●	●

Research questions	Desk review	Risk assessment	Needs assessment	Consultation of CAAFAG	Gender analysis	Stakeholder analysis
13. What are the criteria of a successful reintegration for boys and girls?	●			●		
14. How do access and control of resources for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?	●				●	
15. How do safety concerns for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?	●				●	
16. How do social and cultural norms for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?	●				●	

C. Timeline

Consider the following timeframes for each step, knowing that you can implement some methodologies concurrently if you have enough human resources.

Week 1: planning - logistics

Week 2: tools adaptation and translation

Week 3: training of staff



Desk review

- 1-2 weeks data collection
- 1 week analysis



Risk analysis

- 1 week data collection
- 1 week data processing and analysis



Needs assessment

- 1 week: data collection
- 1-2 weeks: data processing
- 1 week: data analysis



Consultation of former CAAFAG

- 1 week: data collection (for 1 workshop and 5 KII)
- 1 week: data processing and analysis



Gender analysis

- 1 week: data collection
- 1-2 weeks: data processing
- 1 week: data analysis



Stakeholder analysis

- ½ day workshop

Remote or in person feedback to adults and children who participated to the context analysis, when possible.

- ½ day

D. Human resources

Consider the following questions as you identify the human resources needs for the context analysis:

• **Who will lead the process?**

It is highly recommended to identify one person as a Context Analysis Lead who will coordinate the multiple sectors and organisations, particularly if it is an inter-agency exercise. If you have the budget, consider hiring a consultant who will lead the whole process and write the report.

In addition, a Leading Team, composed of focal points from each organisation involved, will review the tools, coordinate data collectors from their own organisation and contribute to the analysis.

• **How many data collectors are available?**

You can involve multiple field practitioners including UN agencies, national and international NGO, CBO and relevant local authorities. The more staff, the faster you can implement the context analysis. However, ensure that all enumerators are trained together and that they receive the same information to avoid differences in the methodology that can affect the result. For each FGD, 2 facilitators of the same sex of the participants are needed. For instance, two female data collectors should conduct a FGD with women or girls. Interpreters should also be the same sex as the participants. One data collector asks the questions, while the other takes notes. Consider a pair of two data collectors that can conduct 4 KII per day or 2 FGD per day.

• **What is the profile of the data collectors?**

The data collectors collecting information from adults should have experience collecting data or be trained to collect data. They can be professional data collectors or child protection field practitioners.

The data collectors collecting data from children **should have experience working with children**, such as caseworkers, child protection officers, experienced data collectors or research, and they should be trained on child safeguarding and safe referral. This is essential to mitigate the risks of doing harm when collecting data with children on sensitive topics.

- **Who are the experts available?**

To effectively implement the context analysis, you will need experts in:

- **Knowledge Management** to develop electronic data collection tools, train the data collectors and process data
- **Gender Equality** to train data collection staff on gender sensitization and to analyse data from the gender analysis
- **Child Protection** to collect data with children, train staff on child safeguarding, establish a referral pathway and analyse data
- **Security** to support the implementation and analysis of the risk assessment

E. Budget

The budget can vary significantly based on the geographic scope of the context analysis, the human resources available from one or multiple actors. Consider the following budget lines to develop your budget:

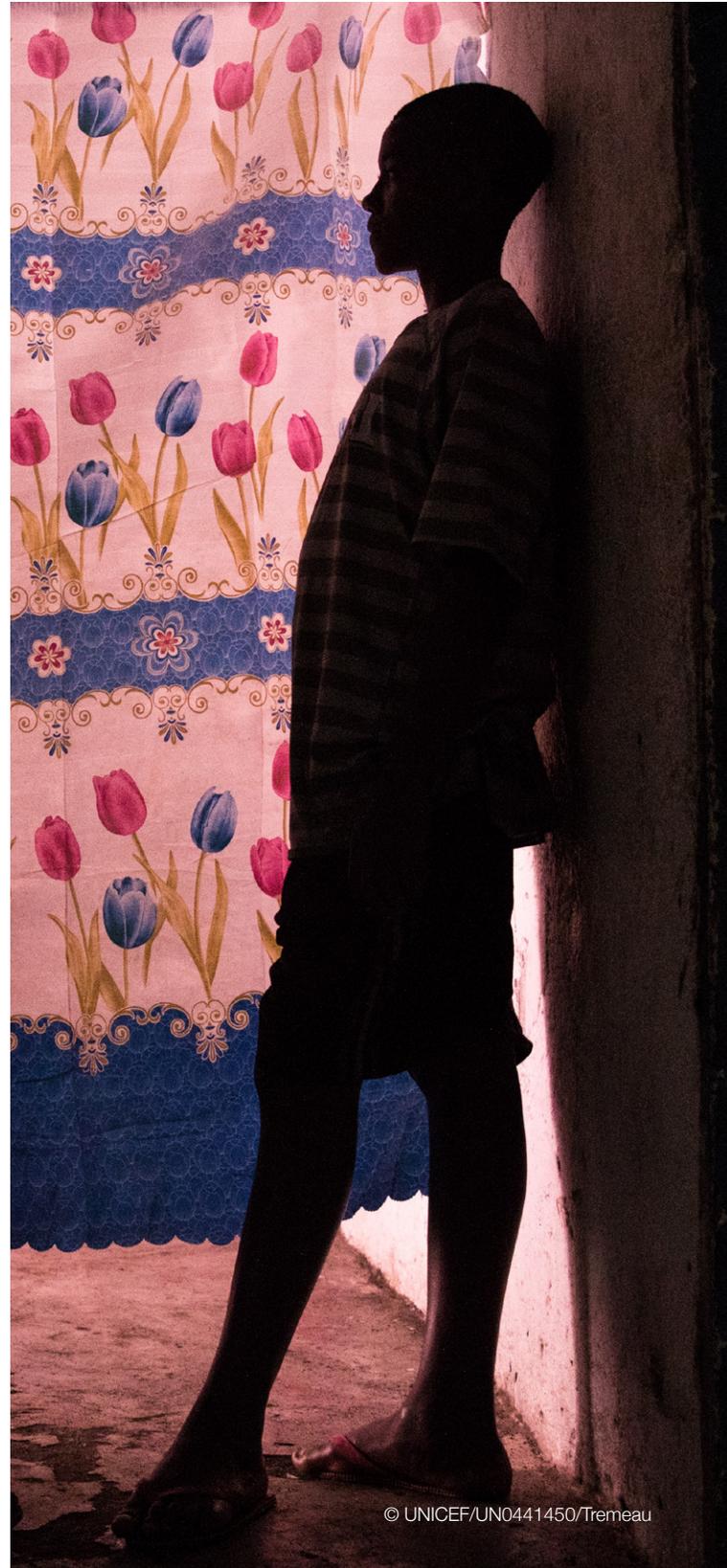
- Translation of data collection tools
- Hiring interpreters
- Hiring data collectors or paying staff overtime
- Training of data collectors (4 days)
- Biscuits and refreshments (if relevant)
- Printing of data collection tools or purchase of electronic data collection tools (tablets/smartphones)
- Travel to/from field sites (vehicle rental, fuel, per diem)
- Travel for external expert (if relevant)
- Hiring a consultant (if relevant)

We have now reached the end of phase one.

The following checklist allows you to check at the end of the first phase whether you have all the information you need to move on to phase 2.

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook
 - Chapter 5 - Situation analysis
 - Chapter 6 - Risk Assessment, Security Planning and Risk-Informed Programming



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PHASE 1 CHECKLIST

Research questions selected

List all the research questions selected

Geographical scope

Indicate the locations selected (the region, district)

Population scope

Indicate the population targeted (host, displaced, refugee)

Methodologies and tools

Based on the research questions, indicate the methodologies and tools selected

Risk assessment

- Key informant interview (KII) – Adults
- Focus group discussion (FGD) – Adults

Consultation with former CAAFAG

- Workshop session plan – Children
- KII Children

Needs assessment

- Rapid Needs Assessment – Household Survey - Adults
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- KII Adults
- FGD Adults
- FGD Children

Gender analysis

- FGD Girls Empowerment Star - Children
- KII Adults

Stakeholder analysis

- Workshop session plan

Timeline

Indicate the estimated timeline to implement the context analysis

Budget

Indicate how much funding do you need



PHASE 2 – GETTING READY

The second phase of the context analysis will contribute to establishing a data collection plan, a workplan, the contextualization of tools and the training of data collectors.

Data collection
plan

B Workplan

C Contextualization
of tools

D Referral pathway

E Training of data
collectors

A. Data collection plan

Based on the scope, methodologies and tools selected (see Phase 1 – B. Selection of methodology), you will develop a data collection plan. Consider for each methodology both genders' perspectives and various age groups. If you implement the context analysis only in one location, increase the number of KII and FGD to collect enough data (guidance on the minimum number of KIIs and FGDs is provided below). As a minimum, you need to use, in each location, every tool selected with at least 3 different populations, including both genders and both age groups (adults and children), in order to triangulate the information.

Geographical location

During Phase 1- Planning, the geographical scope of the context analysis should be identified. The locations include the regions and districts (or any other relevant administrative division) selected for the context analysis.

During Phase 2 – Getting ready, specific sites should be selected to conduct the context analysis. A minimum of 3 sites per location should be identified based on evidence (anecdotal or other) of ongoing recruitment, proximity to conflict, presence of armed groups/forces and diversity of population (host population/displaced/refugee, various ethnic groups, urban/rural).

A site is a distinct community with a formal, legal, customary, geographical or other pragmatic boundary allowing an estimate of its population. Based on the context, the main parameters of selecting a site are:

- In a non-camp setting, the smallest administrative unit (such as a village, a neighbourhood or a population grouping) can be taken as a distinct site.
- In camp settings, each camp can be taken as a site.
- If populations with distinct characteristics (such as language, ethnicity, place of origin, status, etc.) live together in one site, and you believe that these characteristics are likely to impact how each group is affected by the recruitment of children, these locations should be divided into multiple sites along the lines of those distinct characteristics regardless of their size¹²⁹.

Sampling

Quantitative data

In the context of this context analysis, quantitative data is mainly collected through the household survey as part of the rapid needs assessment.

The household survey target's group is the adult population in a specific location. The sample should be **representative of the population** at a certain time and **random** to avoid bias.

The random selection of households can be through various methods such as segmentation to identify cluster or using the random walk method. Based on your context, identify the best selection method. More information about the selection methods can be found in the [UNICEF MICS Conducting field work](#).

The sampling is based on a total population of a selected site which has clear boundaries such as a village or a camp. (See paragraph on Geographical location) The sampling should be representative of the total population in terms of gender, age, nationality, language and ethnic groups.

In order to determine the sample size, the following questions should be considered:

- **What type of indicator are you measuring?**
The lowest the prevalence is, the larger the sample should be.
- **What is the goal of the study?**
This is a descriptive study for a single group at a single point in time. You also need to consider the level of precision and power.
- **What levels of disaggregation are needed?**
The more levels of disaggregation of an indicator will mean larger sample size when precision or power is needed.
- **What do we know about the study population?**
 - How large is the population of the study area?
 - Is the population concentrated (e.g. urban area) or dispersed (e.g. rural area)?
 - Is a sampling frame available for the study area?
- **What constraints do we need to consider?**
- **How many respondents can we afford?**

You can find additional information about sample size formula and guidance [here](#).

Qualitative data

In a qualitative survey, which is the case for most of the tools of the context analysis (KII, FGD), the target group may differ based on the tool selected.



Key Informant Interview

Adults: Select members of the population who have frequent contact with children, who know about the risks children and their families may face. This may include teachers; women and youth group leaders; health care practitioners; social workers; shopkeepers; etc. Focus on men and women within the population who have the most insight into the lives of children that are at risk, marginalised, or isolated. Consider gender balance in the numbers of men and women interviewed.



Focus Group Discussion

Adults: Select men and women, members of the population who have frequent contacts with children, who know about the risks children and their families may face. Consider a diversity of age and ethnic groups and gender balance. The focus group discussions should be implemented in separate groups for men and women.

Children: Select girls and boys aged 15 to 17. They don't need to be former CAAFAG. Children should be from diverse ethnic and minority groups, including children with disabilities and chronic illness. Some may be at school, in apprenticeships or out of school. The focus group discussions should be implemented in separate groups for girls and boys.

Tips to identify children

- Consider door-to-door outreach to mobilise home-bound girls and boys to take part in consultations.
- Inform parents and caregivers of girls and boys about the purpose, location and duration of the assessment and seek signed consent before inviting the children.
- Consider sampling limitations given the restrictions on many girls' freedom of movement and their limited engagement in humanitarian activities. Where required, collaborate with organisations with an existing programme that either focuses on or includes a significant number of girls, and those with access to parents and community gatekeepers such as teachers, Parents and Teachers' Associations, community leaders, youth leaders, and faith leaders.

The sampling for KII and FGD includes a minimum of 4 KII and 2 FGD in each site for the risk assessment, and 4 KII and 4 FGD for the needs assessment and 4 KII and 1 GD for the gender analysis to cover both gender and age groups (men, women, boys and girls).

See below a sample of data collection plan.

Location			
	Site A	Site B	Site C
 Desk review	Collect any information, reports or data specific to site A	Collect any information, reports or data specific to site B	Collect any information, reports or data specific to site C
 Risk assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD with women 1 FGD with men 2 KII with men 2 KII with women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD with women 1 FGD with men 2 KII with men 2 KII with women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD with women 1 FGD with men 2 KII with men 2 KII with women
Total risk assessment	2 FGD and 4 KII	2 FGD and 4 KII	2 FGD and 4 KII
 Needs assessment	Household survey X with men X with women	Household survey X with men X with women	Household survey X with men X with women
Total Rapid assessment	X household surveys	X household surveys	X household surveys
OR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD with boys 1 FGD with girls 1 FGD with women 1 FGD with men 2 KII with men 2 KII with women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD with boys 1 FGD with girls 1 FGD with women 1 FGD with men 2 KII with men 2 KII with women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD with boys 1 FGD with girls 1 FGD with women 1 FGD with men 2 KII with men 2 KII with women
Total Comprehensive needs assessment	4 FGD and 4 KII	4 FGD and 4 KII	4 FGD and 4 KII
 CAAFAG consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 workshop with boys 1 workshop with girls OR 5 KII with former CAAFAG	1 workshop with boys and girls	
 Gender analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD Girls Empowerment Star with girls 2 KII with men 2 KII with women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD Girls Empowerment Star with girls 1 FGD Community Map with men 2 KII with men 2 KII with women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FGD Community Map with women 1 FGD Girls Empowerment Star with boys 2 KII with men 2 KII with women
Total Gender analysis	1 FGD and 4 KII	1 FGD and 4 KII	1 FGD and 4 KII

B. Workplan

The workplan is based on the number of data collectors available and the methodologies selected. The more human resources are available, the more data collection can take place concurrently in multiple locations/sites. Similarly, for the data processing and analysis. The data collection method (paper form or electronic data collection) and the number of staff available will also impact the speed of data processing and the analysis.

See below a sample of workplan.

Activity	Person responsible	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
Planning and logistics	Context analysis lead	●								
Desk review	Context analysis lead	●	●							
Tool adaptation and translation	Leading team with support from security, child protection and gender equality experts		●	●	●					
Data collectors training	Knowledge management, CP and gender equality expert Context analysis lead		●	●	●					
Risk assessment data collection sites A,B and C	NGO X in site A CBO Y in site B NGO Z in site C					●				
Risk assessment data processing and analysis	Security expert						●			
Needs assessment data collection sites A	NGO X					●				
Needs assessment data collection sites B	CBO Y						●			
Needs assessment data processing and analysis	Knowledge management expert and team Leading team							●	●	●
Consultation of former CAAFAG workshops	NGO Y in site A NGO Z in site B						●	●		
Consultation of former CAAFAG data processing and analysis	Knowledge management expert and team Leading team								●	
Gender analysis data collection sites A	NGO Y					●				

Activity	Person responsible	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
Gender analysis data collection sites B	NGO X						●			
Gender analysis data processing and analysis	Knowledge management expert and team Leading team Gender equality expert							●	●	
Feedback to communities	NGO X in site A, NGO Y in site B, NGO Z in site C						●	●	●	●
Stakeholder analysis workshop	Leading team						●	●	●	●

C. Contextualizing the tools

The context analysis tools are generic tools that should be reviewed considering a specific context and based on the findings of the desk review and the risk assessment. The Leading team, with the expert in gender equality and in child protection review the data collection tools, with inputs from field staff who are familiar with the locations and potential sensitivities.

Each questionnaire for KI and FGD should be reviewed, including the revision or removal of questions to ensure it is appropriate in your context. Additional questions can also be added if needed.

Consider the following:

- The questions should be adapted to context by translating and simplifying language; using locally relevant terms; and selecting questions that align with programme design in the location.
- Contextualize the services, the resources, the location, the roles of children etc mentioned in the questionnaires to your context as well as the list of potential answers.
- The term CAAFAG can be not understood or too sensitive. It would be useful to check in the community how CAAFAG are designated sensitively and adapt the data collection tools.
- Depending on the cultural norms of the group of respondents, you may change the order of questions so that the most sensitive questions come at the most appropriate time in the discussion – either earlier or

later. Seek advice from representatives of the group to understand which approach is most appropriate. Never close the discussion immediately after a difficult, emotional, or sensitive topic has been raised. If the more sensitive questions are towards the end of the discussion, have a lighter question or facilitate a positive activity before closing the session.

Driving questions

- **What are the research questions ?**
You may want to narrow down the focus to specific information you need and reduce the number of questions based on the information collected through the desk review.
- **What is the level of sensitivity of the topic in the selected locations?**
Based on the results of the risk assessment, you may want to broaden the scope and include additional child protection risks so that the focus is not only on CAAFAG.
- **What is the target population of the tool?**
Boys and girls will be part of the context analysis. As a result, any adaptation to the tools for children should be age appropriate.
- **Will the tools need to be translated?**
The tools are available in English, French, and Spanish. Consider translation in local languages and then back into English to check translation accuracy.

D. Setting up a referral pathway

Before the start of data collection, the leading team should set up a referral pathway in case of disclosure of violence or abuse against a child. This includes a list of service providers, in particular actors providing case management, mental health and legal support. Ensure the service providers have the capacity to accommodate additional caseload, verify if they have selection criteria and check the quality of service before referring people.

Both a child protection and a gender-based violence field actor, providing a quality case management service, should be identified in each location where data collection is conducted. A caseworker from the identified service providers should be available on site during data collection, in case there is disclosure of violence or abuse against a child or a woman. The data collectors will be trained on how to safely refer a child or a woman to a service provider. This is critical to mitigate the risks of doing harm when collecting data from children and women on sensitive topics. See tools for a sample of referral pathway.

E. Training of data collectors

Data collectors will attend a series of training sessions based on the methodology and tools selected and based on the age group targeted.

Data collection training

All data collectors should be trained on how to use FGD and KII questionnaires as well as other relevant tools. The training includes information about the purpose of the context analysis, key principles of ethical data collection, practice using the tools, (including electronic data collection tools if relevant), how to handle disclosure of violence or intention of self-harm and how to handle participants distress. This is a 2-day training course.

Child safeguarding

All data collectors who will interact with girls and boys should be trained on child safeguarding and sign a code of conduct in order to ensure child safety during the data collection process. Ideally, these data collectors have previous experience in interacting with children, such as caseworkers or child protection officers. Organisations who have child safeguarding policy and training materials can use their own. Otherwise, they can use this 1-day child safeguarding training and code of conduct developed by Save the Children.

Gender sensitization

The gender sensitization training is a requirement for all data collectors who will collect information from men, women, boys and girls. However, since all methodologies and tools are gender sensitive, it is recommended to train all data collectors in gender sensitization. The training covers core concepts of gender, power, and equality. Organizations who have developed gender sensitization training can use their own. Otherwise, they can use a half-day gender sensitization training developed by IRC.

The training of data collectors should include the following topics based on the methodology they will use and the target groups:

Training required based on the methodology and tools

Methodology and tools	Data collection (practice and use of relevant tools 2 days)	Child safeguarding 1 day	Gender sensitization 1 day
Risk assessment	●		●
Needs assessment FGD with children	●	●	●
Needs assessment FGD and KII with adults	●		●
Consultation of former CAAFAG	●	●	●
Gender analysis FGD with children	●	●	●
Gender analysis KII with adults	●		●
Stakeholder analysis			●

The following checklist allows you to check that you have all the necessary information before moving on to the third step.

PHASE 2 CHECKLIST

Sites

List all the field sites (village, camps, settlement, etc.) selected to implement the context analysis

Sampling

Indicate the sampling for the household survey and/or the number of KII, FGD and participants in the workshops.

Workplan

Your workplan is finalized, including the sites, the tools, the persons responsible and the time frame.

Tools

- All the tools selected are contextualised
- All the tools are translated into the local language (if relevant)

Training of data collectors

All data collectors have been trained in relevant training.
Indicate how many data collectors were trained in each training.

Organisation	Total number of data collectors	Data collection	Child safeguarding	Gender sensitization
NGO X				
NGO Y				
Government				



PHASE 3 – IMPLEMENTATION

The third phase of the context analysis will focus on the data collection, data coding, and data analysis.

A Data collection

B Data coding

C Data analysis

A. Data collection

The data can be entered using paper forms, recording and transcription or using electronic data collection tools such as [ODK](#), [Kobo](#), or any other tool that you are used to. Consider electronic data collection for the household survey since it is quantitative data. Data from KII and FGD should be recorded through paper forms, recording or computers. Data from the workshops should be recorded directly in the Excel database provided. The knowledge management focal point should identify the best data collection methodology based on the context and the type of data collected. It is worth mentioning that electronic data collection may require more training time for data collectors. However, this approach can significantly improve the quality of quantitative data collected, particularly for the household survey, and the speed of data processing.

B. Data coding

The coding is a process to reduce large amount of qualitative data into small chunks of meaning, easier to analyse.

After data collection has been completed, the data collected through KII and FGD should be coded and entered into a database. Data entry and analysis Excel tables are available for each methodology with the objective to help categorize and simplify the raw data, and thus facilitate the analysis. (See below)

Data entry and analysis tools

- Risk assessment Data entry & analysis
- Needs assessment Data entry & analysis
- Gender analysis Data entry & analysis
- Consultation with ex CAAFAG Data entry & analysis
- Stakeholder analysis Data entry and analysis

The coding process can include the following steps¹³⁰:

1. **Become familiar with the data.** Go through all the transcripts of the KII and FGD to get familiar with the data.

2. **Enter the data** into the relevant database.
3. **Clean the data.** For example, if some data under a specific question, responds to another question, move the data to the right question.
4. **Generate initial codes.** Codes are a few words or a short sentence that summarizes a response to a question. It is recommended to use a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to generate codes, meaning that there is a first pre-set of codes that is then completed during the coding process.

Identify preliminary codes based on the research questions and the data collected for each question in the tools and organize data in a meaningful way in the first tabs of the database, (not in the analysis tab). The data coders will then code one transcript each, based on this first set of codes.

They will compare their codes, discuss them, generate definitions for each code and modify them before moving to the rest of the transcripts. Some new codes may be generated as more transcripts are coded. Once you have a list of codes for each question, add the code in a different colour to the existing text in the cell.

For example, to the question *Who are the people that influence the decision for girls and boys to join armed groups or forces?* (FGD Adults in the Comprehensive Need Assessment) identify a first set of codes such as parents, relatives, peers, religious leaders, community leaders, etc. More codes can be added as you go through more scripts. Ensure that all data coders are informed of new codes created and their definition.

5. **Search for themes.** A theme is a pattern that captures significant information about the research question. It can be the collation of multiple codes under overarching themes.

For example, under the question *Why do boys/ girls join armed groups or forces?*, you may have a series of codes with specific reasons. These can be collated around the four levels of the socio-ecological framework.

¹³⁰ Adapted from Moira Maguire, Brid Delahunt. Doing a thematic Analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. AISHE-J D Vol Number 3 (Autumn 2017)

C. Data analysis

Once the data are coded, the data will be analysed based on the research questions selected. In each data entry & analysis tables, there is a tab “analysis” that links data from the tables with the list of question for each tool to the analysis table. This table organizes the data per research question in order to facilitate the analysis.

Organise the analysis report according to the research questions selected during phase 1.

In the analysis, identify how many key informants and focus group discussion participants have reported a particular item of information. Prioritize data that has been triangulated, meaning that at least 3 people have reported it. If an item of information was reported by only one or two people and you believe it is an important information item, highlight in the report that only one/two persons have reported this information.

The table below that summarize the methodologies, tools and questions relevant to each research question will guide the analysis process.

Trends

Using the information in the table at the beginning of each data collection tool, try to analyse information based on various factors, such as the location (a particular community or district, urban or rural); the population (host, displaced or refugee) or according to the armed group or armed force recruiting. Add as many filters as needed in the analysis table to refine your analysis.

You may also identify new trends, or signs of change such as an increase in recruitment due to threats being made, younger age of recruitment or increased acceptance of girls who are survivors of sexual abuse, a positive change of social norms in gender roles, etc.

Age and gender analysis

In addition, identify age and gender trends in your analysis. Using the population and age filter in the database, try to identify trends or differences according to age groups, mainly children versus adults, and according to gender. Often children have a very different perspective than adults, and males do not necessarily have the same viewpoints as females.

Disaggregate all data per age and gender, using the following categories:

- Girls 0-5
- Boys 0-5
- Girls 6-11
- Boys 6-11
- Girls 12-17
- Boys 12-17
- Women (above 18)
- Men (above 18)

Use the checklist Phase 3 checklist to check everything is covered.

Congratulations, you are now ready to design a quality and gender sensitive programme, informed by former CAAFAG!

Table to guide the analysis process

Research questions	Risk assessment	Needs assessment	Consultation of CAAFAG	Gender analysis	Stakeholder analysis
1. What are the risks staff may face implementing a CAAFAG project in this location?	KII adults Q2,9 FGD adults Q7				
2. What are the risks former CAAFAG boys and girls may face implementing a project in this location?	KII adults Q3 to 8 FGD adults Q1 to 6				
3. What are the mitigation measures to mitigate the risks?	KII adults Q10,11 FGD adults Q8,9				
4. What is the scale of the recruitment?		Rapid assessment KII adults Q1,2,3,4 Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q1 to 3 FGD adults Q1 to 3			
5. What are the processes of recruitment of boys and girls, who are involved in the decision making, are there differences according to their age?		Rapid assessment KII adults Q5,6,7,8 Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q4 to 9 FGD adults and children Q4,5			4.2 Map the relationships
6. What are the risk and protective factors to recruitment for boys and for girls, are there differences according to their age?		Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q10,11 FGD adults Q4 FGD children Q2	3.1 Risk and protective factors KII Q1,2		
7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls?		Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q22 FGD adults Q6 FGD children Q5			5.2 Stakeholder engagement
8. What are the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls during the period of association, based on their age?		Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q13,14	4.2 Roles and responsibilities KII Q3,4		
9. How are boys and girls released (formal vs informal modes of release), are there differences according to their age?		Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q15,16	4.3 Release process KII Q5, 6		

Research questions	Risk assessment	Needs assessment	Consultation of CAAFAG	Gender analysis	Stakeholder analysis
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls?		Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q17 FGD adults Q7,8 FGD children Q6,8	4.4 The release game KII Q7		5.2 Stakeholder engagement
11. What are the challenges and risks faced by boys and girls during their reintegration at the individual, family, community and society levels, are there differences according to their age?	KII adults Q4,5	Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q18,21 FGD adults and children Q4,5	5.2 Attributes of doing well and obstacles KII Q9		
12. How the humanitarian community can contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?		Comprehensive assessment KII adults Q23	5.2 Attributes of doing well and obstacles 5.4 The path to doing well		5.2 Stakeholder engagement
13. What are the criteria of a successful reintegration for boys and girls?			5.3 Diamond ranking KII Q8	EIC adults Q14, 15	
14. How do access to and control of resources impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?				KII adults Q1 to 9	
15. How do safety concerns for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?				KII adults Q10,11 Girls empowerment star Q3,4	
16. How do social and cultural norms for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?				KII adults Q13 to 16 Girls empowerment star Q1,2,5 KII adultes Q13 to 16	

PHASE 3 CHECKLIST

Data collection

Data recording methods

Indicate the method selected to record data for each tool (paper forms, recording and transcript, electronic data collection)

All data are collected

Coding

All transcripts of KII and FGD are entered in the data entry and analysis table

All data are coded

Analysis

All data are analysed

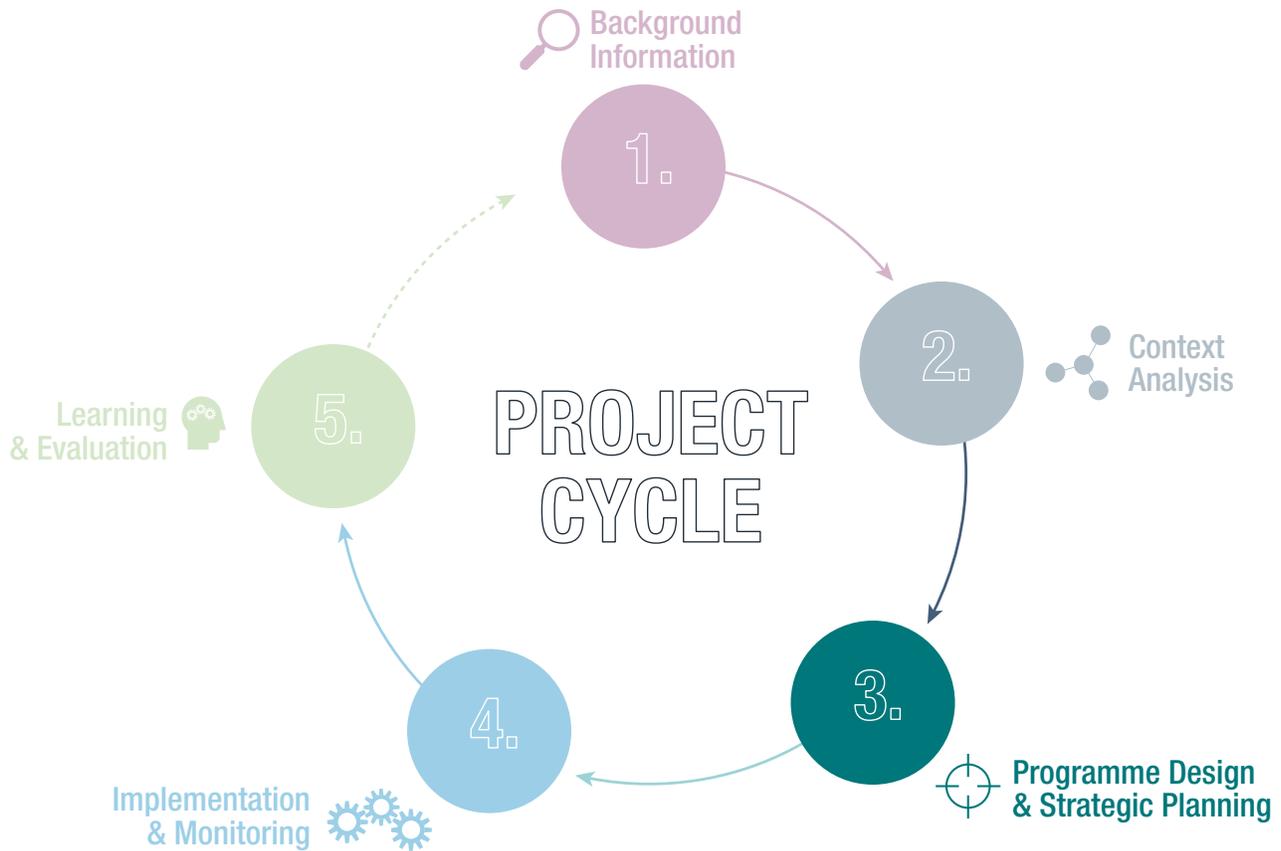
The report is finalized

3. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND STRATEGIC PLANNING



CAAFAG

Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines



1.

- A. Introduction to CAAFAG
- B. Legal and Normative Framework

2.

- A. Research Questions and Scope
 - B. Methodology Selection
 - C. Timeline
 - D. Human Resources
 - E. Budget
- A. Data Collection Plan
 - B. Workplan
 - C. Contextualizing the Tools
 - D. Setting up a Referral Pathway
 - E. Training of Data Collectors
- A. Data Collection
 - B. Data Coding
 - C. Data Analysis

Programme Design & Strategic Planning

- A. Programme Design**
 - Key considerations and framework
 - Prevention programme design
 - Release programme design
 - Reintegration programme design

- B. Monitoring**
 - Development of culturally sensitive indicators
 - Performance and measurement framework

- C. Human Resources**
 - Scale and staffing
 - Competency and skills framework

- D. Budget**

4.

- A. Child Safeguarding
- B. Data Protection
- C. Monitoring
- D. Human Resources
- E. Coordination

5.

- A. Generating & Documenting Learning
- B. Evaluation

The programme design and strategic planning step aims to developing a quality and gender sensitive programme that incorporates the perspectives of children. It includes A) Programme design, B) Monitoring, C) Human Resources, and D) Budget sections.

A. Programme design

The programme design step should only start once the context analysis is completed, including the data collection and the data analysis. The following paragraphs will guide field practitioners through the design of programmes for CAAFAG, including considerations for the project duration, a programme design framework and the socio-ecological framework.

Key considerations and framework

Child participation

Children and young people, including former CAAFAG, should be involved in project design, using the information collected during the context analysis. This is critical to ensure no harm is done and the appropriateness of project activities to the needs of children.

Findings from the workshops conducted with former CAAFAG ([See 2.B Methodology – Consultation of former CAAFAG](#)) as well as findings relevant to the following context analysis research questions reflect the views and perspectives of children that should be considered during programme design.

7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls?
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls?
13. What are the criteria of a successful reintegration for boys and girls (status, relationships) and what is needed to achieve it? Are there differences and commonalities?

Project duration

CAAFAG programmes require a holistic approach in addressing the needs of children in complex settings. As a result, medium to long-term projects are expected to be more effective. Programmes shorter than one year are unlikely to be successful to effectively influence prevention, release, and/or reintegration outcomes. Reintegration interventions in particular take longer periods of time to address the needs of CAAFAG.¹³¹ Ending a CAAFAG programme before children are fully reintegrated in their communities and families may cause harm. It may impact the trust that has been built up over time with the children, compromise the progress towards reintegration and it may increase the risks of re-recruitment.

Programme design framework

This guidance includes a programme design framework that will help you structure the design of your programme and develop a project proposal.



CAAFAG programme design should include the following:

- **A goal** framed around the holistic needs of CAAFAG
- **Objectives** organised around the main components of programming selected: Prevention, Release, and/or Reintegration
- **Outcomes** under each objective that reflect concrete changes expected by the end of the project.
- **Interventions and activities**, spanning across different sectors and implemented at all levels of the socio-ecological framework that address gender and age specific needs of CAAFAG and children at risk of recruitment and use.

The data collected during the context analysis (including the desk review) will inform the programme design, the selection of interventions and activities, based on the research questions you have selected.

Goal formulation

The goal reflects the high-level impact that the programme or project will contribute to. The goal should reflect children affected by conflict and CAAFAG as a target group and be framed around their specific needs that are to be addressed. They will be adapted to the programme component that you will include, namely prevention, release, and or reintegration.

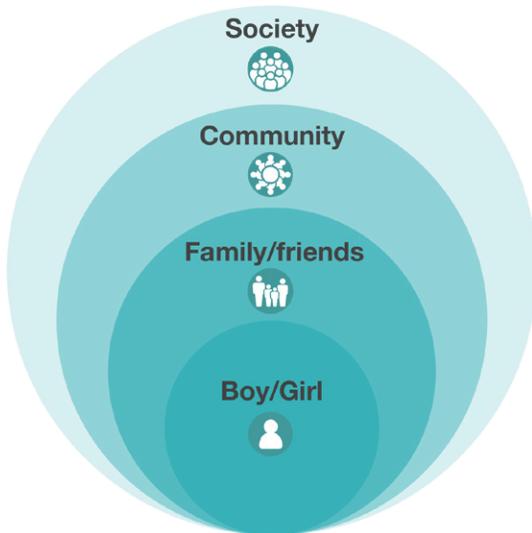
Here is an example of a goal that you can adapt:

- Girls and boys affected by conflict are protected from recruitment and use, safely released from armed forces and armed groups and reintegrated into their community

Socio-ecological framework

The socio-ecological framework is a useful model to frame prevention, release, and reintegration programmes. It includes four levels, the individual/child, the family, the community and the society.

Socio ecological framework



 **The individual or child level** identifies biological and personal history factors that affects the recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of children. Some of these factors include age, education, income, skills and history of abuse.

 **The family level** (also called the relationship level) examines family relationships, as well as friendships and intimate relationships that may influence their

behaviour and increase the risk of recruitment and use, and affect their release and reintegration.

 **The community level** explores the settings, such as schools, neighbourhoods in which social relationships occur, as well as the community structures and dynamics that may have an impact on recruitment and use, release and reintegration.

 **The society level** looks at the broad societal factors that create the conditions in which recruitment is permitted or unintentionally facilitated. These factors include social and cultural norms, as well as economic, educational and social policies that may contribute to recruitment but also influence release and reintegration.¹³²

This model looks at an entire situation to identify the influencing factors and elements at all levels and how they interact with each other. It considers a full range of problems, factors, solutions that can contribute to prevent recruitment, facilitate release and promote reintegration. It promotes flexible programming that integrates new learning and adapts accordingly throughout implementation. It includes both formal and informal elements of child protection systems.¹³³

The socio-ecological framework is used throughout the programme design phase as a basis for prevention, release, and reintegration programming. You can easily find the various level of the socio-ecological framework, using the following icons:



Below is an illustrative example of a programme framework that addresses prevention, release and reintegration needs of CAAFAG, including examples of goal, objectives and outcomes. Examples of interventions for each levels of the socio-ecological framework are provided throughout the programme design section. By the end of the programme design step, you will be able to develop your own programme framework.

¹³² National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of Violence Prevention

¹³³ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019)

Goal

Girls and boys affected by conflict are protected from recruitment and use, safely released from AFAG and reintegrated into their community

Objectives

Girls and boys affected by conflict are protected from recruitment and use

Girls and boys CAAFAG are safely released from AFAG

Girls and boys former CAAFAG and vulnerable children are reintegrated in their community

Outcomes

Risk factors of recruitment and use are addressed

Protective factors of recruitment and use are strengthened

Girls and boys are safely released through formal and informal processes

Girls and boys are reunified with their families and their needs are addressed

Girls and boys have improved health and psychosocial wellbeing

Older girls and boys are financially self-sufficient

Girls and boys have their education needs met

Girls and boys' rights are protected when they are in contact with the law

Girls and boys are socially integrated in their family and community

Activities structured around the socio-ecological framework



Individual level activities



Family level activities



Community level activities



Society level activities

The following sections include guidance for designing programmes related to the prevention of recruitment of children, the facilitation of release, and the promotion of reintegration.

Prevention programs address the risk factors of recruitment, strengthen protective factors, and provide alternatives to the dangers inherent in association with armed forces or armed groups. Release programmes include the process of formal and controlled disarmament and demobilisation of children from an armed force or armed group as well as the informal ways in which children leave by escaping, being captured or by any other means. Reintegration programmes process and promote children's transition into civil society, including meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities.¹³⁴

You may, in your context, based on the mandate of your organization, the resources available, and the coordination among actors, consider all three, or only one or two of these sections.

Prevention programme design

Based on the literature, prevention programmes seek to address identified risk factors at multiple levels, capitalise on existing community-level structures¹³⁵, strengthen protective factors, and advocate for multisectoral policies to ensure access to basic community services.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Paris Principles (2007)

¹³⁵ O'Neil et al (2018)

¹³⁶ Vargas-Baron (2007)

The following paragraphs will help you organize information collected during the context analysis, using the socio-ecological framework and the multisector approach. This will be the basis of a brainstorming exercise to identify prevention interventions relevant to your context, building of examples from various countries.

1. Organize the data collected

First, organize the information collected during the context analysis, and relevant to prevention. This includes findings to the following research questions, from the context analysis:

4. Who are the armed groups and armed forces recruiting? (Desk review)
5. What are the processes of recruitment of boys and girls, who is involved in the decision making, are there differences according to their age and gender? (Needs assessment – Stakeholder analysis)
6. What are the risk and protective factors for recruitment for boys and for girls, are there differences according to their age and gender? (Needs assessment – Consultation of former CAAFAG)
7. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and help prevent recruitment of boys and girls? (Needs assessment – Stakeholder analysis – Consultation of CAAFAG)
14. How do access and control of resources impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys? (Gender analysis)
15. How do safety concerns impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys? (Gender analysis)
16. How do social and cultural norms for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys? (Gender analysis)

Recruiting armed groups (Question 4)

Information related to recruiting of armed forces and armed groups can be documented through the desk review, in particular MRM reports. The strategies of recruitment may vary significantly from one group to another, and as a result, prevention interventions may vary as well. It is therefore important to document each armed group and force separately for the development of prevention strategies that are specific to each armed force or group.

The processes of recruitment (Question 5)

The recruitment of children may be forced (including elements of coercion), or may appear “voluntary”. In practice, the frontiers between the various forms of recruitment are blurred, and purely voluntary recruitment is challenging to determine, as various risk factors influence child recruitment.

The list below summarizes the major forms of recruitment. Create your own list, including age and gender considerations. This information will be used to develop prevention strategies that will complement programmes addressing risk factors and strengthening protective factors.

- Abduction from homes, schools, while fetching water or firewood, in the fields or other locations.
- Parents and communities are forced into giving up their children as part of a quota system imposed on communities, under threat of harm, to negotiate the release of prisoners, etc.
- Propaganda is used to encourage boys and girls to enrol. Schools, madrasas, and public and religious gatherings and social media are preferred entry points to communicate about the ideology of the group and identify future recruits. Promises of access to money, clothes, food or toiletries are often used to encourage children to enrol.
- Peer pressure can encourage boys and girls to join armed groups and armed forces.
- Parents or family members are part of an armed group or force and encourage their children to join.
- The community requests or forces families to contribute to community self-defence militias in giving up children.
- Girls have a close relationship with an armed group fighter.
- Girls are recruited through early and/or forced marriage to combatants.

The process of recruitment may involve various factors and actors. Understanding the key players, who influence the decision or the path towards child association with an armed force or group, and who decide, provides valuable information to design a prevention programme. Processes of recruitment may also vary according to the age of children and their gender. Based on the needs assessment and the stakeholder analysis, you will be able to identify “influencers” who may have the power to influence the

recruitment of children, towards parents for instance, or towards recruiters. They may also have the power to change social norms and make recruitment of children unacceptable in a given location.

For example, traditional leaders, such as faith leaders, may have an influence on the recruitment of children by self-defence armed groups and be able to increase the age of recruitment with armed group leaders.

Risk and protective factors (Question 6)

Risks factors are cumulative, it is rarely one but rather multiple risk factors that contribute to the recruitment of children. Similarly, it is the accumulation of protective factors at all levels of the socio-ecological framework that may have an impact. The enhancement of protective factors combined with direct interventions to address risk factors may contribute to the prevention of recruitment. It is important to note that addressing risk factors or

strengthening protective factors at only one level of the socio-ecological framework will unlikely have a significant impact. Prevention programmes are more likely to be successful if they address multiple levels of the socio-ecological framework.

Below is a table that summarizes the most common risks and protective factors to recruitment. However, each context is different and documenting details of specific risk and protective factors is critical. Create your own table with protective and risk factors organized by socio-ecological levels, based on the information collected during the context analysis and using the [Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action Identifying and ranking risk and protective factors A brief guide resource](#).

[For more details, see Background information - Introduction to CAAFAG on p 11.](#)

Socio-ecological framework levels	Protective factors	Risk factors
 Individual	<p>Children's equal access to services¹³⁷</p> <p>Children's access to gender-equitable education¹³⁸</p> <p>Children's access to opportunities to develop problem-solving skills, learning and adaptation¹³⁹</p> <p>Children's ability to find meaning in life¹⁴⁰</p>	<p>Need for physical protection as girls and boys are exposed to risks of violence, sexual abuse, arrest, harassment or abduction in their communities^{141 142}</p> <p>Desire for empowerment and gender equality, particularly for girls pursuing participation in hostilities^{143 144}</p> <p>Desire for meaning, glory and adventure, fighting for a cause</p> <p>Extreme poverty¹⁴⁵, lack of economic opportunities Desire for revenge, particularly after the death of parents, relatives or friends¹⁴⁶</p>
 Family	<p>Presence of consistent and caring caregivers, including kinship care or foster family¹⁴⁷</p> <p>Caregivers' opportunities to exercise agency and judgment in the cultural context¹⁴⁸</p> <p>Caregivers' access to income and economic opportunities¹⁴⁹</p>	<p>Poor relationships with their caregivers, neglect, domestic violence, sexual abuse or forced marriage¹⁵⁰</p> <p>Alcohol and substance abuse and mental health problems in their caregivers¹⁵¹</p> <p>Children separated, unaccompanied or orphaned¹⁵²</p> <p>Parents engaged in an armed group¹⁵³</p>

137 Paris Principles (2007)

138 Child Soldiers International (2016)

139 Ibid

140 Ibid

141 Mazurana & Carlson (2006)

142 Douglas et al (2004)

143 Mazurana & Carlson (2006)

144 Ibid

145 United Nations Development Programme (2017)

146 Bernd (2013)

147 Paris Principles (2007)

148 Wessells (2005)

149 International Labour Organization (2003)

150 Wessells (2009)

151 Moreno et al (2010)

152 International Labour Organization (2003)

153 Vargas-Baron (2007)

Socio-ecological framework levels	Protective factors	Risk factors
 <p>Community</p>	<p>Community access to income and economic opportunities, as well as health, social services, etc¹⁵⁴</p> <p>Supportive community environment and social networks¹⁵⁵</p>	<p>Community ties with an armed group or defence militia that leads to pressures on families to allow recruiting of their children¹⁵⁶</p> <p>Lack of strong community level protection mechanism. The community puts pressure on families to satisfy the request of the armed group in return for “peace” or protection of the community¹⁵⁷</p> <p>Displaced or refugee population¹⁵⁸</p>
 <p>Society</p>	<p>Setting up of a national database recording the recruitment and disappearance of girls and boys¹⁵⁹</p> <p>Implementation of national action plans to prevent the recruitment of children by armed forces and groups including laws and policies enforcement¹⁶⁰</p> <p>Collaboration when possible with military authorities and armed groups¹⁶¹</p> <p>Implementation of international and regional laws prohibiting the recruitment of children¹⁶²</p> <p>Implementation of international and regional monitoring and accountability mechanisms to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts¹⁶³</p>	<p>Presence of a conflict, geographic proximity to a recruiting armed group or force and duration of the exposure¹⁶⁴</p> <p>Low presence of the State in remote areas¹⁶⁵</p> <p>The marginalisation of a minority group¹⁶⁶</p>

Support of existing practices (Question 7)

Existing practices from the children, the families, the communities to prevent recruitment should be documented through the needs assessment. It is always preferable to leverage safe and successful existing practices that have been put in place locally, rather than creating and imposing new ideas from outsiders. Existing prevention practices may include strategies developed by communities to resist the pressure from armed groups to “give away” children in return for protection. Documenting these existing practices is therefore critical, as well as identifying key actors and human resources in these practices which may be considered as protective factors to strengthen. Other suggestions of interventions can also

be identified through the consultation of former CAAFAG. Former CAAFAG are usually well aware of the reasons why they joined and what could have prevented their recruitment. This is valuable information to document to inform project design.

Impact of access and control of resources (Question 14)

Access to and control of resources for children may affect their access to services such as education or health services and contribute to their recruitment and use by AFAG. Some services may be accessible in principle but in practice children may not have control over the decision to access these services. Identifying barriers to access to services will inform prevention strategies.

154 African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2014)

155 Save the Children (2005)

156 International Labour Organization (2003)

157 Information collected from key informant

158 Save the Children (2005)

159 Child Soldiers International (2011)

160 Child Soldiers International (2015)

161 War Child (2018)

162 Singer (2004)

163 Johnson (2018)

164 O’Neil (2018)

165 Johnson (2018)

166 Information collected from key informant

167 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

168 Vargas-Baron (2010)

Impact of safety concerns (Question 15)

Safety concerns, particularly for girls may lead to recruitment and use. Some girls may feel unsafe in their community and seek protection from AFAG as a survival strategy. They may also feel unsafe in their homes, due to a history of abuse, including sexual abuse. Understanding how safety concerns may be a risk factor to recruitment will contribute to the development of prevention strategies.

Impact of social and cultural norms (Question 16)

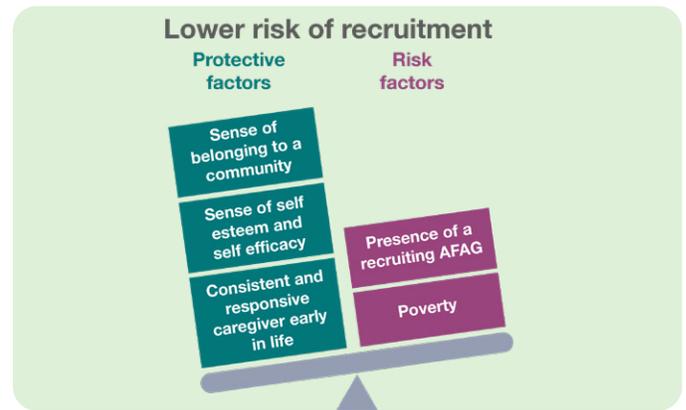
Social and cultural norms may have a significant impact on the prevention of recruitment. Some social and cultural norms may encourage recruitment. Children's association with an armed group may be perceived as a learning experience that is necessary to their development, or children who are associated may be perceived as heroes. In other contexts, gender social norms may expose girls to higher risks of recruitment. These norms may be influenced through transformative programmes that will be part of the prevention strategy.

2. Consider key approaches to prevention

Second, consider the prevention approaches, including addressing risk factors and strengthening protective factors, the community approach and the multi-sectoral approach.

Addressing the risk factors and strengthening the protective factors is one of the most important approaches to prevent recruitment. In a given context, children can be more or less vulnerable to recruitment. If a child is exposed to a higher number of risk factors than protective factors, their vulnerability may increase and they may be at greater risk of experiencing recruitment. Protective factors act to counterbalance risk factors, increasing children and families' coping capacity and resilience to protect their children from recruitment.

The risk factors to recruitment were documented during the context analysis. In addition to culturally-based protective practices, there are universal protective factors that contribute to the prevention of recruitment as listed in the table below on risk and protective factors.



The community approach can play a meaningful role in the prevention of recruitment and use of children. In the context of conflict, the capacity of community actors may be weakened and they can also be a source of risk for children. A community approach includes an assessment and an understanding of how communities naturally protect children, who are influential people, and the strengthening of protective mechanisms through community mobilization, capacity building, etc.

A multi-sectoral approach encourages the collaboration between organisations in various sectors and involving communities and people.¹⁶⁷ Child protection actors alone will unlikely be able to address all risk factors and should involve relevant sectors. A coordinated response among government, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations involved in protection, education, health, water and sanitation, peace-building, justice, security, food, livelihood, social protection or shelter response is required in identified communities and based on the risk factors identified.¹⁶⁸ It is important to emphasise the shared responsibility in preventing recruitment across sectors to maximise sources of funding. This should be coupled with training in mainstream child protection for personnel implementing services for children, adolescents



and their families across all sectors, to safely identify and refer CAAFAG. The training should include a gender-sensitive response that addresses the specific needs of girls, as well as confidentiality. Additionally, organisations covering multiple sectors can coordinate their interventions in targeting similar locations and population. The Child Protection Area of Responsibility coordinator, the CAAFAG task force leaders or inter-agency coordinators also have the responsibility for coordinating service delivery with other sectors in locations where there is ongoing recruitment, based on the risk factors identified. ([See 4.E Coordination on p. 141](#))

3. Develop prevention objectives and outcomes

Thirdly, develop objectives and outcomes that are specific to prevention interventions.

Objectives reflect expected changes arising from the prevention programme, which is the project purpose. The objectives are part of the project framework. ([See Key considerations and framework p 67](#)).

Here are prevention-related objectives that you can adapt to your context:

- Girls and boys affected by conflict are protected from recruitment and use
- Risks factors are addressed and protective factors are strengthened to prevent recruitment and use of girls and boys affected by conflict

Outcomes reflect the multiple changes that are expected by the end of the project to achieve the objective.

Outcomes can be framed around risk and protectors, or around the socio-ecological levels.

Here are some examples that you can adapt based on your context.

- Risks factors to recruitment and use are addressed at individual, family, community and society levels
- Boys and girls are empowered with skills, knowledge and services to promote peace and prevent recruitment and use
- Communities are empowered with skills and knowledge to protect boys and girls from recruitment and use
- Remote communities are supported with basic services to provide boys and girls with alternatives to recruitment and use

4. Brainstorm prevention interventions

Fourth, brainstorm prevention interventions using the information collected in the context analysis and the answers to the 3 key questions (*What are the risk and protective factors; the process of recruitment; existing prevention practices and actors to mobilize; and are there differences according to age and gender?*). The following table can help organize ideas and identifying prevention programmes.

- Select among the risk and protective factors those that can be addressed based on the context. Consider the factors that can be feasibly addressed and those who may have a large impact on recruitment.*
- Using the information you have collected during the context analysis, including recommendations from youth and former CAAFAG, and the examples of prevention intervention on p.75, brainstorm interventions that could address each risk factor and strengthen protective factors selected, including age and gender considerations.
- Consider in particular:
 - the involvement of other sectors, based on the risk and protective factors selected.
 - youth engagement in the design and implementation of prevention activities
 - risk and mitigation measures identified in the risk assessment to not do harm to children, communities and staff.

The table below suggests a model to organize and present ideas with succinct examples of interventions.

Socio-ecological levels	Examples of risks and protective factors	Examples of intervention	Involvement of other sectors
 <p>Individual</p>	Risk factors		
	<p>Lack of economic and educational opportunities</p>	<p>Access to entrepreneurship programmes for youth, including financial literacy. Promote access to nonformal and formal primary and secondary education opportunities involving older youth who have completed their education.</p> <p>Support access to education and livelihood opportunities for girls who have children with day-care centres and gender-sensitive education training for teachers and school principals.</p> <p>Risk mitigation measures: The project communication should focus on the promotion of youth in the communities and not on the prevention of child recruitment.</p>	<p>Coordination with the Livelihood and the Education sectors to provide access to services in area X.</p>
<p>Lack of opportunities for meaningful engagement of youth</p>	<p>Access to life skills programmes and youth empowerment programmes promoting girls and boys youth-led projects in their communities.</p> <p>Strengthening existing community-led initiatives that give young people access to economic opportunities</p>		
 <p>Family</p>	Risk factors		
	<p>Poor relationships with caregivers</p>	<p>Promote change of behaviour and use of positive parenting practices through parenting skills session for caregivers</p> <p>Risk mitigation measures: The project communication should focus on the promotion of appropriate care and reduction of violence in the communities and not on the prevention of child recruitment.</p>	<p>Coordination with the GBV sector to prioritise prevention of domestic violence initiatives in areas X</p>
	<p>Domestic violence</p>	<p>Promote change in behaviour and social norms on domestic violence through a series of discussions for men and women.</p>	
Protective factors			
<p>Presence of caring caregivers</p>	<p>Train and empower parents who do not send their children for recruitment to talk to other parents to encourage youth retention in communities and involvement in livelihood and education opportunities.</p>		

* The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2022)

Socio-ecological levels	Examples of risks and protective factors	Examples of intervention	Involvement of other sectors
 Community	Protective/Risk factors		
	Lack /presence of strong community level protection mechanisms	Identification and strengthening of existing community level protection mechanisms through training of frontliners in safe identification and referral. Identification and empowerment of key community figures, or “influencers” in each community who have the power to shift social norms and make recruitment unacceptable. Implementation of community-led dialogues. Support community dialogues across communities, involving CAAFAG when it is safe to do so, led by community leaders who are preventing recruitment in their communities.	Coordination with shelter cluster in IDP/refugee contexts
 Society/ Government	Risk factors		
	Low presence of state	Advocate to the regional administration to strengthen State presence in identified areas	Coordination with all relevant sectors to increase State presence (Health, Education, Security, WASH, etc.)
Protective factors			
	Database recording disappearance of girls and boys	Reinforce existing data base that records missing children believed to be recruited or set up community led databases	

Examples of prevention interventions

Individual level Youth-led projects to prevent recruitment in Iraq

In Iraq, the International Rescue Committee has implemented a youth-led project, to collectively develop community projects and implement recreational activities with the aim to empower girls and boys and prevent recruitment. Youth between 14 and 17 years old benefited first from a life skills training using the Save the Children’s Youth Resilience training package and a training session on how to develop a project and manage a small grant. Gender segregated groups of girls and boys worked together to identify needs in their community and developed a response plan. They developed a short project proposal, a budget and a pitch to introduce their ideas to a panel for validation.

This project contributed to provide girls and boys with new skills and empowered them to contribute meaningfully to the development of their community. Although the budget was small, which created frustration, feedback from the

young people emphasized how they enjoyed having the freedom to meet and a forum to share their ideas with others, particularly girls, as they have fewer opportunities to socialize.

Countering extremist messages

Adolescents are particularly responsive to armed groups’ messages that give the promise of a reward, stimulate their empathy, their desire to support their community or to fight discrimination and injustice. In Iraq and Syria, the strategy of the Islamic State (IS) combined professional media techniques with “user-driven” engagement. Thus, supporters widely shared on social media platforms officially validated or produced messages, narratives, and memes. IS provided many raw materials for “jihobbysts” to develop their own propaganda. This strategy was particularly effective as there is an empowering element. To counter effectively counteract armed groups’ branding and messages the following points should be considered.

- 1) It requires a unified brand messaging across the international community to promote a cohesive adherence

to the group. 2) Reactive counter narrative myth busting strategies that highlight the discrepancies between the propaganda and the reality does not work. They rather enhance defensive reactions from supporters. A proactive communication strategy that does not use counter theological narrative has more impact. 3) The credibility of the messenger is determinant, to avoid a backfire effect. Involving deserters should be considered carefully as their security can be put at risk, although their voice and message are more likely to be heard and accepted by supporters.¹⁶⁹ 4) Gender sensitive messages are critical.



Family level

Involving women in the Philippines

In the Philippines, a context analysis revealed that mothers, sisters and grandmothers had a pivotal role in influencing social and cultural norm change regarding the recruitment of children. UNICEF worked closely with the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade leadership and the members and shared responsibilities in implementing the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign.¹⁷⁰

Peace building and family co-existence

The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare implemented a National Policy on Peacebuilding and Family Coexistence between 2005 and 2015 to prevent and address family violence. Lesson learnt from this policy highlight the importance of intersectoral strategy focused on individuals, families and communities, promoting values of peaceful coexistence and equipping families with tools to peacefully solve conflicts. This programme led to improved communication skills, decreased bullying in schools, promoted community integration, decreased violence in the community, and participants were more equipped to cope with issues such as gang violence.¹⁷¹



Community level

A child is not a soldier!

In CAR, Child Soldiers International has developed a picture flipbook translated into the local language to sensitize communities to the risk of recruitment. It was developed to facilitate community dialogue around both the positive and negative outcomes of recruitment, with the aim of coming to the conclusion that the negatives outweigh the positives.

Child Protection Committee members were trained in the use of the booklet to organise awareness raising campaigns, how to involve local leaders and authorities and invite warlords to engage in dialogue.¹⁷²

Involvement of community leaders

In Somalia, Intersos organizes regular workshops with people in power, community leaders, local and formal

authorities to sensitize them on the risks of recruitment. They are trained on child rights, the Somalia constitution, and articles from the CRC. They are also trained on the definition of a child from the CRC as opposed to cultural definition. Clan-based leaders have a lot of influence in their communities. They are able to sensitize the families to not give up their children to armed groups. Community leaders are thus trained as advocates to fight against the recruitment, they are mediators and contribute to the prevention of recruitment.¹⁷³

Youth-led prevention initiative

In Mali, the organisation AMSS (Association Malienne pour la Survie dans le Sahel) has mobilized boys and girls in the prevention of recruitment. AMSS has trained 1128 youth who have established youth clubs, organizing activities for youth, including sensitization on various protection issues. Girls and boys have developed and implement drama plays in local language for young people and caregivers in communities, featuring young people exposed to recruitment and the consequences for themselves and their family. Thus, young people sensitize other young people on the risks of recruitment, and alternatives as they know better how to communicate with other young people. The drama plays are recorded and posted on Facebook and circulated through other social media. They also organize door-to-door campaign to sensitize caregivers.

“They earn nothing through this project, they are only motivated with tee-shirts and training opportunities. They are happy to contribute to their communities.”¹⁷⁴

Prevention in Colombia

In Colombia, Plan International implements a programme to prevent recruitment. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, the project focuses on the problems communities, caregivers and children are facing and how to find solutions collectively. They organise group discussions with children and caregivers, on various topics, such as protection, self-care, education, health, but they do not talk openly about recruitment, as it could put them at risk. The difficulties they face in accessing education for example can be a driver to recruitment. Contributing to address their daily changes can thus contribute to prevent recruitment. They also organise life skills activities for children to empower them to prioritise their education.¹⁷⁵

169 Rogers (2018)

170 United Nations and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (2007)

171 Global partnership for Children and Youth Peacebuilding (2015)

172 Child Soldiers International (2019)

173 Key informant interview

174 Key informant interview

175 Key informant interview



Society – government level

Access to services to prevent recruitment

In the Philippines, two years before the signature of the Action Plan, a series of discussions between UNICEF and MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation front), and the “Day of Peace” campaign led to implementing a programme including the provision of basic health services and early childhood education in locations controlled by MILF. This approach contributed to building trust between parties and demonstrated UNICEF’s commitment to support MILF communities. This was further completed with the involvement of the government to improve local government units and the implementation of services aimed at preventing and responding to abuse against children. Then, community-based Child Protection Networks were established in MILF controlled areas and contributed to the prevention of recruitment.¹⁷⁶

Preventive Activities and Training that Works for At-Risk Youth

The USAID-funded Preventive Activities and Training that Works for At-Risk Youth (PATHWAYS) project was designed and implemented by the American Refugee Committee with the aim of improving the capacity of individuals and communities to prevent and respond to violence in Guinea through the creation of community management committees, conflict prevention-oriented life skills training and providing economic opportunities to at-risk youth. Integrating youth into programme and design using ‘peer-to-peer’ capacity building techniques was critical to its success. This ensured that the project remained relevant to young participants, helped to empower and build the confidence of trainers, and helped to ensure the programme’s sustainability. The training curriculum was experiential, culturally relevant and was appropriate for young people with low literacy levels and little business experience. Collaboration with local micro-finance institutions and local businesses ensured that the programme was demand-led. A perceptions survey administered at the end of the first year of the project found that participants’ incomes had increased, that the number of ex-volunteer combatants who were prepared to take up arms again had fallen from 82% to 46%, and that participation in violence had declined.¹⁷⁷

Deed of commitment for the protection of children

In 2010, Geneva Call has developed the [Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children](#) from the Effects of Armed Conflict. This mechanism allows

armed non-state actors to “publicly pledge to respect international humanitarian norms and be held accountable for their commitments”. It aims to address the recruitment and use of children, as well as broader child protection issues in promoting compliance with humanitarian norms related to child protection. Following the signature of the Deed of Commitment, the Armed Non-State Actors (ANSA) will first monitor the implementation through self-monitoring and the submission of compliance reports, code of conduct and internal regulations concerning its child protection standards. This first step serves as an initial indicator of the commitment of the ANSA to adhere to the norms. Second, third-party monitoring checks the claims of the ANSA, involving human rights groups and other actors. In the situation of serious allegations of non-compliance, a last monitoring method involves an external verification to comply with the Deed of Commitment. Through this process, the Geneva Call can maintain a better oversight and offers guidance when needed. Additionally, to strengthen ownership and compliance to international standards, it is key to support ANSA to include international humanitarian law and child protection standards in their combatant military training. This approach, based on constructive dialogue, can contribute to a better understanding of ANSA’s realities and thus support them more efficiently to develop and enforce their own internal child protection mechanism. It may also serve as a stepping-stone towards the signature of action plans with the United Nations.¹⁷⁸

Dialogue with armed group on the recruitment of children

Dialogue with armed groups on the recruitment of children In the Philippines, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) understanding that the age of maturity in the perception of Islam differed from the international definition of a child. The MILF consulted the religious council Darul Ifta to ensure that the Action Plan did not contravene Islamic teaching and principles before the signature of the agreement. After multiple discussions between UNICEF and MILF leaders, base commanders requested field commanders to discourage parents from bringing their children to the camp and gradually prevented children’s access to the military camp. Consequently, MILF issued a New Command Order directing all commanders and officers to prevent the recruitment of children who were disengaged and children at-risk through regular screening of troops, and ensuring accountability in cases of non-compliance. This approach contributed to the reduction of recruitment of children.

176 United Nations and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. (2017)

177 Harrelson et al (2008)

178 Goodlife (2013)

179 Ibid

180 Glass N et al (2019)

181 Paris Principles (2007) 2.6

182 Paris Principles (2007)

183 United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (2005)

184 O’Neil et al (2018)

In addition, a context analysis revealed that mothers, sisters, grand-mothers had a pivotal role in influencing social and cultural norm change regarding the recruitment of children. UNICEF worked closely with the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade leadership and members and shared responsibilities in the implementation of the “Children, Not Soldier campaign”.¹⁷⁹

Communities Care: Transforming Lives and preventing violence programme, Somalia and South Sudan

The objective of the programme is to promote safer communities for women and girls in shifting harmful social norms that contribute to sexual violence into positive social norms that promote women’s and girls’ equality, safety and dignity.

The programme focuses on care and support for survivors of sexual violence, and involves the community in collective action to prevent violence.

The result of the research in Somalia demonstrated significant improvement in social norms, particularly in the norm of protecting family honour and a husband’s “right” to use violence.¹⁸⁰

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook
 - Chapter 11 - Community-Level Approaches to Prevention of Child Recruitment
 - Chapter 12 - Prevention of Child Recruitment and Use through National Legal Frameworks and the Security Sector
 - Chapter 13 - Advocacy and Awareness Raising
 - Chapter 14 - Child Participation in Peacebuilding Activities
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Prevention](#)
- [The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action. \(2021\) Identifying and ranking risk and protective factors A brief guide.](#)

Release and identification programme design

“Release includes the process of formal and controlled disarmament and demobilisation of children from an armed force or armed group as well as the informal ways in which children leave by escaping, being captured or by any other means. It implies a disassociation from the armed force or armed group and the beginning of the transition from military to civilian life. Release can take place during a situation of armed conflict; it is not dependent on the temporary or permanent cessation of hostilities. Release is not dependant on children having weapons to forfeit.”¹⁸¹

Children associated with AFAG (Armed Forces and Armed Groups) have the right to release and reintegration at all times, including in the midst of conflict, without precondition.¹⁸² This is important for all actors to know, particularly in locations where peace agreements are being negotiated. Unlike for some DDR programmes and processes for adults, because recruitment and use of children is a violation of child rights, the signature of a formal peace or other agreement is not a requirement for the identification and release of a child. Accordingly, identification and release of children, including girls, shall not be delayed during negotiations for such agreements.¹⁸³

Trajectories for children’ exits vary significantly based on the context but also based on individual experiences. Exit seems to be a combination of two processes: *desistance* (cessation of activity for the group, including support activities) and *disengagement* (disincorporation and de-identification as a group member). Thus, even children identified as released and who benefit from reintegration programmes, may have in reality not fully exited the armed force or group. For example, children with parents enrolled in the armed group or armed force, girls married to commanders or girls with children whose father is still enrolled are particularly affected. They may have desisted from the group but may not be disengaged. As a result, the so-called release process may not be a onetime event, but rather a process where connections with the armed group are maintained and weakened over long periods of time. This is also relevant to children who live in communities where armed groups are still present. The risk of re-recruitment and use is very high.



Additionally, it is important to recognize that neutrality is often challenging, if not impossible in some contexts. Some children may have no choice but to take a side to survive, sometimes side-switching. In contexts where the State assumes the entire population of a location supports an armed group, there is no benefit to neutrality.¹⁸⁴

The following paragraphs will help you organize information collected through the context analysis using the socio-ecological framework and the formal and informal release process approaches. This will be the basis of a brainstorming exercise to identify prevention interventions relevant to your context, building of examples from various countries.

1. Organize the data collected

First, organize the information collected during the context analysis, and relevant to release and identification. This includes the finding for the following research questions, from the context analysis:

8. What are the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls during the period of association, are there differences according to their age/gender/ ethnicity or other characteristic? (Needs assessment – Consultation of CAAFAG)
9. How are boys and girls released (formal vs informal modes of release) and identified, are there differences according to their age/gender/ ethnicity or other characteristic? (Needs assessment – Consultation of CAAFAG)
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls? (Consultation of CAAFAG – Stakeholder analysis)
14. How do access and control of resources impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?
15. How do safety concerns impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?
16. How do social and cultural norms for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys?

Roles and responsibilities (Question 8)

The roles and responsibilities, organized as direct participation in hostilities and indirect participation in hostilities can be useful in the release and demobilization process. Formal DDR processes tend to focus more on children who directly participated in the hostilities. Other roles, such as wife of fighter or support roles can be ignored in the formal release process and these children may miss an opportunity to benefit from reintegration programmes. In contexts where association with armed forces and armed groups is criminalized, documenting the roles and responsibilities can be useful in advocating for respect for child rights and ensuring that all children associated with armed forces and armed groups are included in release programmes.

Modes of release and identification (Question 9)

The various modes of release should be documented during the needs assessment and the consultation of

former CAAFAG workshops and KII. You may have documented both formal and informal exit processes. It is important to analyse, if possible, difference according to age, gender, ethnicity and recruiting armed groups or forces. The experience of former CAAFAG on the modes of release and identification is critical to document. How did it go, what is their perspective? Preferred modes of release and identification can be different for boys and for girls and it is important to know why. Are children exposed to more or less risks according to the mode of release and identification? For instance, do girls have access to the correct information about their rights to reintegration? This may also be influenced by the presence of female staff during demobilisation exercise, or the knowledge of demobilisation actor about the eligibility of girls.

Support for existing practices of release and identification (Question 10)

Some informal modes of release and identification may in practice, involve community members, the family or any other actors. For example, families may send messages to their children who are recruited, to inform them that they will be welcome back home. Documenting these existing practices can be useful to strengthen community-level mechanisms and inform children of the reintegration services available.

Recommendations from former CAAFAG to facilitate their release and identification are valuable information to inform release programmes without causing any harm, particularly for girls who may not want to be formally identified due to stigma.

Impact of access and control of resources (Question 14)

Access to and control of resources for children may affect their access to services such as formal and informal release and prevent their access to reintegration programmes. Some children because of their gender, fear of stigmatization, retaliation or arrest, may not feel comfortable accessing release programmes or be identified. Some services may be accessible in principle but in practice children may not have control over the decision to access these services. Identifying barriers to access to services that can be an entry point to identification of CAAFAG will inform release strategies. Identification of CAAFAG will inform release strategies.

Impact of safety concerns (Question 15)

Safety concern, particularly for girls may affect their access and desire to be part of a release programme and be identified as a CAAFAG. Some girls may feel unsafe in a traditional DDR military environment and will purposely avoid formal demobilisation processes. Understanding

how safety concerns may affect identification processes will contribute to the development of safe release and identification strategies.

Impact of social and cultural norms (Question 16)

Social and cultural norms may have a significant impact on the release of children. Some social and cultural norms may discourage children to be identified as a former CAAFAG. This is particularly relevant to girls who may be stigmatized due to their association. They may as a result intentionally avoid release programmes. These norms may be influenced through gender transformative programmes that will be part of release and identification strategies.

2. Consider key approaches to release and identification

Secondly, consider the two main release and identification approaches in your programme design, namely formal and informal release processes.

Formal release involves the formal transfer of children from armed forces and armed groups to a designated third party for their care and protection. Such processes should be available to all children associated with armed forces and armed groups, as the first step in returning to civilian life.

National governments have the responsibility of facilitating the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups in their territory according to international legal frameworks. In practice, some governments may be unwilling or unable to carry out this role. Peacekeeping actors and child protection actors therefore often play key roles. However, efforts should be made to increase government responsibility and capacity to facilitate such a process.

In contexts where formal disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR processes) are in place, special provision should be made for children.¹⁸⁵ The [‘Integrated DDR Standards related to Children and DDR’](#) developed by UNICEF provide guidance on how to ensure that the specific needs of children are taken care of during DDR formal processes. The guidelines focus on children’s sensitive DDR intervention that “seek to maximize the benefits of children while minimizing any harm”.¹⁸⁶

Formal release of children may take various forms, including:

- Through Handover protocols signed with armed forces and armed groups
- At cantonment sites, DDR authorities may identify children when visiting barracks¹⁸⁷

Informal release can take various forms, with or without the consent of armed groups and forces. Informal release and exit might happen in situations where there is no child release and reintegration programming, where child protection actors have little access or influence or in locations where there are ongoing release programmes. Informal mechanisms of release are also often quicker and easier to navigate for children.

Some children may have missed formal release programmes or may have chosen to discreetly exit the AFAG out of fear of retaliation and stigmatisation, particularly girls. Informal release is often the preferred mode of release for girls, mainly to avoid social stigma. They go back to their communities by their own means or to other locations where they tend to hide and rarely seek reintegration services.¹⁸⁸

Children leave armed forces and groups informally through various ways such as:

- Children escape by running away on their own or with support from civilians.
- Children may present themselves to police/military/peacekeepers for help.
- Children may have a loose on/off affiliation with an armed group that wanes over time as their reasons for becoming associated decrease.
- Children may be released by the armed force or group; because they are sick or injured and no longer useful, they may be abandoned after a defeat or the armed force or group fears prosecution, or out of compassion, etc.
- Children may be released as a result of negotiations between local community members and armed actors.
- Children may be released during ad hoc, on-the-spot agreements between peacekeeping or child protection actors and individual commanders. Such opportunities may present themselves when there is a change in the local dynamics of the conflict. For example, an armed group under siege may agree to the evacuation of civilians, and the release of children associated with them may be part of the negotiations.
- Children may be captured by an opposing force or a peacekeeping force during a battle.

185 Paris Principles 3.12

186 Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standard (IDDRS) Module 5.20 UN DDR Resource Centre

187 The Steering Committees for the Paris Principles (2021)

188 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action. (2020)

- Children may be arrested and detained during screening processes instigated by authorities, particularly children who are associated while living within communities in urban areas.¹⁸⁹

Children who have informally exited from armed forces and armed groups return to the community and can then be identified in different ways:

- Through Child Protection Committees whose members have been trained in safe identification and referral.
- By health, psychosocial support, or education services providers for instance, who have been trained.

Training in safe identification is essential to take into consideration the context and mainly, to not expose children to further risks of stigmatization, reprisal or arrest. The consent or assent of the child and his/her caregivers should be obtained before the referral. See Case management for Child Protection guidelines.

3. Develop release and identification objectives and outcomes

Thirdly, develop objectives and outcomes that are specific to release interventions.

Objectives reflect expected changes of the release programme, which is the project purpose.

The objectives are part of the project framework. ([See Key considerations and framework p 67](#))

Here are release objectives that you can adapt to your context:

- Girls and boys who are CAAFAG are disengaged from armed forces and armed groups
- Girls and boys who are CAAFAG are disengaged and deidentified from armed forces and armed groups

Outcomes reflect the multiple changes that are expected by the end of the project to achieve the objective. Outcomes can be framed around formal and informal release processes, or around the socio-ecological levels. Here are some examples that you can adapt to your context.

- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG are released through safe formal processes
- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG are released through safe informal processes
- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG have access to information that contribute to informal release

- Communities are empowered with the skills and knowledge to release boys and girls from armed forces and armed groups
- Government and armed actors are empowered with skills and knowledge to release boys and girls from armed forces and armed groups

4. Brainstorm release and identification interventions

Fourthly, brainstorm release and identification interventions using information collected in the context analysis and the answers to the 4 key questions (*what are the recruiting AGAG; the roles and responsibilities of children in the AFAG; the process of release and identification; existing release and identification practices that can be leveraged; and are there differences according to age and gender?*). The following table can help organize ideas and identifying release and identification programmes.

- Identify the shortfalls of the current practice of both formal and informal release processes in terms of:
 - Number of children released and identification compared to the number of children known to be recruited
 - Do no harm, particularly for girls
 - Respect for child rights in the release and identification process
- Base on this information collected during the context analysis, including the perspectives and views of young people and former CAAFAG and the examples of release and identification programmes on p. 83, brainstorm interventions that could address the shortfalls identified and improve the protection of child rights during formal and informal release and identification process, including age and gender considerations.
- Consider risk and mitigation measure to not do harm to children, communities and staff based on the risk assessment findings conducted during the context analysis.

The table below suggests a model to organize and present ideas with succinct examples of interventions for both formal and informal release and identification. The two approaches complement each other and may contribute to reach children with difference profiles. Most interventions should be at the bottom of the table, under society, government, NGO and community levels. However, some actions can involve children and families when it is safe to do so.

Socio-ecological levels	Current practice shortfalls	Interventions	
		Formal release	Informal release
 Individual	<p>Children are not aware of release and demobilisation programmes</p>	<p>Guiding question: How young people can safely be involved in the release and identification processes?</p>	<p>Young people encourage their peers to leave the AFAG and share information about release programmes</p>
 Family	<p>Families are not welcoming former CAAFAG and children fear exiting and being rejected by their family</p>	<p>Guiding question: How families can be safely involved in the release and identification processes?</p>	<p>Families send messages that they will welcome back their children through the radio</p>
 Community	<p>The community is not welcoming and children fear exiting and being rejected by the community</p> <p>Communities are supportive of recruitment</p>	<p>Guiding question: How communities can be safely involved in the release and identification processes?</p>	<p>Community members discuss with community self-defence armed group leaders the release of children in coordination with the DDR team</p> <p>Child Protection Committees are trained in safe identification and referral of children. NGOs build on existing informal community-level mechanism to identify children who informally exited AFAG</p>
 Society – Government – NGO	<p>Informal release process is not accepted by the government</p> <p>Age assessment process is challenging</p> <p>Eligibility criteria prevents release of dependants of fighters</p> <p>The release process is not gender-sensitive</p> <p>The government holds in detention children associated with armed groups designated as terrorist</p>	<p>Guiding question: How the government, NGO, the UN etc can safely be involved in the release and identification process?</p> <p>UN trains government security personnel in child-friendly age assessment</p> <p>The UN signs a handover protocol with AFAG, including a clear action plan, inclusive eligibility criteria, and a gender-sensitive approach</p> <p>The UN and NGOs advocate for CRC enforcement in the release process</p>	<p>NGOs build on existing informal community-level mechanisms to identify children who informally exited AFAG</p> <p>NGOs offer services to all vulnerable children in communities and identify former CAAFAG who have disclosed their informal exit</p> <p>NGOs train service providers in safe identification and referral of children.</p>

Examples of release and identification interventions

Individual level

Encouraging CAAFAG to leave armed groups

Some studies suggest that informing children about the support they would receive may motivate them to exit the armed group. In Northern Uganda, an intervention used helicopters to drop flyers in the bush and used local radio programmes to share information on how to escape or surrender with the promise of forgiveness from the community. This approach encouraged children and young people who were abducted as children to leave the LRA (Lord Resistance Army).¹⁹⁰ Girls held in captivity were told by the LRA that if they escape, they will be killed when they go back to their community. However, some girls who escaped talked on the radio and shared their stories. The children who listened to the radio realised that they would not be killed and planned an escape.¹⁹¹ In Sierra Leone, a similar experience was conducted. Parents sent messages through the radio to let their children know they would be welcomed back home, if they left the armed group.¹⁹² In DRC, Child Soldier International sent similar messages to girls through hunters travelling through the forest. This approach was successful, particularly in areas with weak radio coverage.¹⁹³

Family level

Building trust with families to support the release process

In the Philippines, CFSI (Community and Family Service International) worked with the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) community to encourage parents to send their children to school rather than working for the armed group. In this context, families are often themselves part of the group, and the recruitment of their children is perceived as a socialisation process for their children. CFSI social workers patiently built trust with community members, particularly with religious leaders who are influential figures in traditional Muslim communities. They worked closely with religious leaders to develop child protection friendly sermons. In parallel, CFSI worked with para caseworkers from the community who provided family case management. Gradually, CFSI social workers finally built trust with families, after almost a year of questions, hesitation and push back. Once they gained their trust, social workers could encourage families to remove their children from the armed group and send them to school.¹⁹⁴



Community level

Community level release mechanism

In Mali, Child Protection actors involved the community to facilitate the release of children. First, Child Protection actors did a mapping of locations under the control of armed groups where the presence of children was reported. Their research demonstrated that armed groups were primarily established on an ethnic and community basis. Community Child Protection Networks (RECOPE) and Local Child Protection Committees (CLPE) were established in relevant locations and their members were trained on child protection, prevention of recruitment and the basics of advocacy. In parallel, influential community leaders from each ethnic group were identified in relevant locations. Child Protection actors organized exchange gatherings with the community leaders in the relevant town hall (“mairie”) to discuss prevention of recruitment, building on local understanding of the place of the child in the family and in the community.

The release process involved multiple actors. 1) The identification of children is usually made by RECOPE/CLPE members who spot children in armed groups, at the back of pickups for example. 2) Then, they report the information to the RECOPE/CLPE supervisor who informs the relevant community leader, based on the ethnic group of the armed group. 3) The community leaders, who often know armed group leaders, advocate for the release of the child. 4) The child is then referred to the relevant NGO based on the referral pathway. 5) UNICEF or a member of the MRM technical group proceeds to the verification and the certification of the child as a CAAFAG and 6) transfers the child to the Transit Care Centre for the interim care followed by family reunification and socio-economic reintegration.

This community approach for release has led to a significant increase in the number of CAAFAG released in 2019-2020.



Society – government – NGO level

Formal demobilisation process in the Republic of South Sudan

Until 2018, less than 1% of released children were girls. Officers assumed girls were with their relatives or were “only” playing supportive roles and were therefore protected. They did not expect girls to be combatants and did not consider that they could play other roles. Protection actors began identifying girls when some of them escaped, and when child protection and

190 Branham (2013) and Palmer (2004)

191 Gustavsson et al (2017)

192 Information collected from key informant

193 Ibid

194 Information collected from key informant

195 UNICEF South Sudan (2019)

196 Binadi et al. (2011)

197 Paris Principles 2.8, 2007

198 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

gender-based violence partners were fully engaged in the demobilisation process. The presence of military child protection focal points in DDR teams has contributed to significantly increasing the number of girls and boys demobilised. They play a critical role, as military officials are more respected by armed actors than civilians. They can better convey messages on child rights, particularly about the need to release girls. On a few occasions, soldiers from armed groups tried to hide girls, pretending they were their children or their wives. Child protection focal points raised the issue with the armed group's senior commanders. Female officers could then access girls, build trust with them, and explain their rights and why the armed group had been demobilised.

This strategy led to an increase in the number of girls formally released from 1% to 35% in 2018 in Yambio.¹⁹⁵

Formal and informal release in Nepal

In Nepal, between 2006 and 2007, the formal demobilization process of children associated with the Maoist group was not as successful as expected. All Maoist went through the disarmament process, but they were not fully demobilized, and remained in the armed group structure. Out of the 2973 children formally released, 40% of them left before the release ceremony and the 60% remaining refused any support from child protection agencies and the government reintegration package. However, some children left the cantonments informally and could return to their communities where child protection agencies created a favourable environment for their reintegration. Child Protection agencies started a family tracing programmes and identified and registered children who had returned to their communities and offered them reintegration support. They worked with communities to prepare them to receive former CAAFAG and linked children with community services.

The analysis of this experience highlights that beyond the weaknesses of the reintegration programme, the government of Nepal was not involved in the process. The rationale was that the government was a party to the conflict, and that it was important to maintain confidentiality of former CAAFAG. However, confidentiality was not a major issue at that time. Not involving the government led to a lack of ownership of the process, a lack of involvement of communities, which could have strengthened community-level reintegration. In this example, the informal release allowed child protection agencies to work directly with the communities and the children and compensated for the shortfalls of the formal process.¹⁹⁶

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook
 - Chapter 15 - Engaging with Armed forces and Armed Groups
 - Chapter 16 - Undertaking Formal Release of Children from Armed forces and Armed Groups
 - Chapter 17 - Understanding and Supporting the Informal Release and Exit of Children from Armed Forces and Armed Groups
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Release](#)

Reintegration programme design

“Child reintegration is the process through which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for children to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured. This process aims to ensure that children can access their rights, including formal and non-formal education, family unity, dignified livelihood and safety from harm.”¹⁹⁷

Reintegration is a complex and ongoing process rather than an event, usually taking place over years rather than months. It represents a period of adjustment and transition from the military experience and identity, towards a new civilian life within a family and community. For many children, reintegration is not focused on returning to a previous life, but rather on seeking to integrate into a new or dramatically changed- environment. It should be understood as a dynamic multi-directional' experience where the family and members of the child's community are also adjusting to accommodate the child.¹⁹⁸

1. Organize the data collected

First, organize the information collected during the context analysis, and relevant to reintegration. This includes the findings for the following research questions, from the context analysis:

8. What are the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls during the period of association, are there differences according to their age/gender/ ethnicity or other characteristic?

11. What are the challenges and risks faced by boys and girls during their reintegration at the individual, family, community and society levels, are there differences according to their age or gender? (Needs assessment – Consultation of CAAFAG – Gender analysis)
12. How can the humanitarian community contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration? (Needs assessment – Consultation of CAAFAG – Gender analysis – Stakeholder analysis)
13. What are the criteria for a successful reintegration of boys and girls (status, relationships) and what is needed to achieve it? (Consultation of CAAFAG)
14. How do access and control of resources impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys? (Gender analysis)
15. How do safety concerns impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys? (Gender analysis)
16. How do social and cultural norms for girls and boys impact the prevention of recruitment and use, the release and the reintegration of girls and boys? (Gender analysis)

Roles and responsibilities (Question 8)

The roles and responsibilities boys and girls have played during the period of association may impact their reintegration. Their direct participation in hostilities may be perceived by the community as a threat to their safety. Children who had positions of power, such as combatant but also as the wife of a commander, for example may have more difficulties reintegrating into civilian life where they no longer have the same privileges. Some children who self-categorize as soldiers, particularly those who spent a long period of time in the AFAG may have doubts about their transition to civilian life.¹⁹⁹ Girls and boys who have been sexually exploited may face additional challenges to their reintegration. As a result, girls may be perceived as less marriageable, and as having “lost their value”,²⁰⁰ particularly in societies where virginity is a requirement to get married. Boy survivors may face stigma associated with perceived homosexuality.²⁰¹ Additionally, the community and families may expect children to behave a certain way based on their roles and responsibilities in the armed groups, which may influence children’s behaviour.

199 Ibid
 200 De la Soudière (2017)
 201 Save the Children (2021)
 202 Wessells (2016)
 203 Betancourt et al (2010)
 204 Stark et al (2009)
 205 UNODC (2019)

Challenges faced by children during reintegration (Question 11)

Children face many challenges during their reintegration, particularly girls. Children report facing stigma and rejection from their families, their communities and from the society as well. Some civilians fear their presence will create problems for the community or to the family and they may fear their unruly behaviour and the violence associated with this.²⁰²

The level of community acceptance and resilience varies significantly based on various factors, including the child’s actual or perceived exposure to violence and abuse, the role they may have played during the period of association and the way they were recruited and released. Social stigmatisation may have also an impact on their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.²⁰³

Information about the challenges they face during reintegration will inform reintegration interventions, taking into consideration individual needs as well social acceptance at the family, community and society levels and the risk they may face in accessing reintegration programmes. The perception of adults and children may be different, as well as expectations on how children should behave.

Contribution to reintegration (Question 12)

Interventions that build on existing practices, initiatives, and human resources from the community are more likely to be appropriate to children’s needs, efficient and sustainable. They reinforce protection mechanism in place and empower children and communities. The community actors who are already playing an active role in the reintegration of children should be identified during the context analysis, particularly through the stakeholder analysis. Findings from the stakeholder analysis will guide the identification of community actors who have the power to influence social acceptance for instance, to engage them in reintegration interventions. Children often have a good understanding of their needs and how to address them. Consultation with former CAAFAG provides valuable information about their perspectives on reintegration and how to support them.

Criteria of successful reintegration (Question 13)

The concept of reintegration is usually based on Western concepts, which may not resonate with the perception of children and local understanding of conflict-related events. Girls and boys actively interpret and give a meaning to their experiences of association and reintegration and should be consulted to inform the design of reintegration programmes.²⁰⁴ The consultation of former CAAFAG through mini workshops will support the participation of children in the identification of culturally relevant indicators of successful and non-successful reintegration.

Impact of access and control of resources (Question 14)

Access to and control of resources may be affected by their association with AFAG. Some children who were associated with a group known as the enemy or a group who has lost the war may lead to community rejection and limited access to services, for instance. In some contexts, children who are at risk of arrest cannot access resources. In patriarchal societies, girls often have more challenges accessing and controlling resources, as their father or partner may control their access. This situation may be exacerbated by their association. Understanding and addressing boys' and girls' barriers to access services will contribute to the success of reintegration programmes.

Impact of safety concerns (Question 15)

In some contexts, children who have escaped from an AFAG may be at risk of abduction, threats, arrest or pressure to be re-recruited. Girls who were married to fighters or considered as a combatant's wife are particularly at risk of abduction. Some children are at risk of arrest and imprisonment, particularly if they were associated with an armed group designated as terrorist. They may also be a target of retaliation from members of the group or from community members.²⁰⁵ These risks should be considered in the design of reintegration programmes, including mitigation measures to ensure that the interventions do not expose children to further harm.

Impact of social and cultural norms (Question 16)

Social and cultural norms may have a significant impact on the reintegration of children. Boys' and girls' experiences may not match the perception of an ideal woman or an ideal man in some societies. Girls wearing military uniforms, carrying guns, driving, displaying "militarized behaviour", who have known men without being married, who had children born of sexual violence for instance, may not be in line with the community or society perception of an ideal woman or girl. Boys who are believed to have committed acts of violence, including killing, raping and torturing, boys who are displaying violent behaviours and who are disobedient to their parents, may not respond to the standards of ideal man or boy. However, these gender norms may have changed due to the conflict, and non-gender-stereotyped roles may be more accepted for girls and boys. In other contexts, children associated with armed groups supported by the community may be perceived as heroes. As a result, community members may not be willing to acknowledge the violence and abuse that CAAFAG may have experienced. The social norms for boys and girls and their evolution is important to take into consideration in the design of reintegration programmes to not expose children to additional risk of stigmatization. For instance, if a girls wants to start a business in a sector that is traditionally not acceptable for girls, strategies to mitigate the risk of stigmatization should be identified.

2. Develop reintegration objectives and outcomes

Secondly, develop objectives and outcomes that are specific to reintegration interventions.

Objectives reflect expected changes of the reintegration programme. The objectives are part of the project framework. ([See Key considerations and framework p 67](#)) Here are reintegration objectives that you can adapt to your context:

- Girls and boys CAAFAG and vulnerable children are reintegrated in their families and communities
- Girls and boys CAAFAG have deidentified from armed groups and are reintegrated in their communities

Outcomes reflect the multiple changes that are expected by the end of the project to achieve the objective. Outcomes can be framed around children's needs. Here are some examples that you can adapt to your context.

- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG and vulnerable children are reunified with their families and their needs are assessed and addressed through case management
- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG and vulnerable children have improved health and psychosocial wellbeing
- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG and vulnerable children
- Older Boys and girls who are CAAFAG and vulnerable children and their families are financially self-sufficient
- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG and vulnerable children have their education needs met
- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG and vulnerable children's rights are protected when they are in contact with the law
- Boys and girls who are CAAFAG and vulnerable children are socially integrated in their family and community
- Families are empowered with the skills and knowledge to promote family reintegration of boys and girls who are CAAFAG
- Communities are empowered with the skills and knowledge to promote community reintegration of boys and girls who are CAAFAG
- Social norms that promote CAAFAG community acceptance are enhanced

3. Consider key approaches to reintegration

Thirdly, consider four key approaches to reintegration. Reintegration support is addressed at individual and family level through a *case management approach* and at community-level through a *community-level approach*. It also includes a *multi-sector approach* involving other sectors as relevant and a *non-targeted approach*, targeting more widely vulnerable children rather than only CAAFAG.

Case management approach

Case management is an approach for addressing the needs of an individual child at risk of harm or who has been harmed. The child and his/her family are supported by a caseworker through direct support and referrals.²⁰⁶ Case management allows for effective identification of the needs of children and for discreet provision of support to children. However, this approach is more beneficial if it is provided to address multiple protection issues in conflict-affected communities rather than specifically targeting and potentially further stigmatising CAAFAG.

Case management actors can holistically assess the situation of girls and boys and their home environment. Caseworkers do this by considering individual protective and risk factors, in order to tailor the response to the specific needs of the child.

A case-management approach contributes to the coordination of multisectoral services by one focal point (the caseworker) for the child, the family and the service providers. The information collected by caseworkers throughout the case-management process can also be anonymized and aggregated to analyse trends and inform programme design.

Through this approach, caseworkers identify the vulnerabilities of girls and boys, but also empower them and support their wellbeing and resilience. Caseworkers can leverage each child's strengths including any skills they gained before and during the period of association, their individual and collective agency and the coping skills they developed.

Individual case management should be coupled with community-level interventions that address stigmatization and social reintegration. Collective approaches, such as providing support to a group of CAAFAG from the same community may also reinforce their sense of belonging. This approach was found to be successful in contexts such as CAR where the set-up of collective support mechanism allowed girls to bond with each other and strengthen a collective identity.²⁰⁷ However large, one-size-fits-all reintegration programmes for girls and boys, which deny their agency and their individual needs, may increase challenges to their reintegration.

The risk of *over-victimising* children, particularly girls considering them as passive victims of recruitment can be detrimental to the reintegration process. It is critical to acknowledge children's unique experiences and their agency in the decision to join the AFAG, if relevant. Caseworkers who build trust and empower girls and boys increase the chances of a successful reintegration. The training of staff members providing full child protection case-management services for CAAFAG is key, particularly in case management for child protection and for gender-based violence (GBV), including Caring for Child Survivors. ([See 4.D Human resources – Learning and Development on p 137](#)) The training should also address the caseworkers' own perception of CAAFAG in their context. A structured supervision mechanism for caseworkers must be in place to support caseworkers in handling difficult cases and to monitor case management quality.

Case management for CAAFAG includes the setting up of a database such as [Primero](#), to keep track of children identified, the services provided, and their reintegration. [Primero / CPIMS+](#) is a digital information management system that can be used to improve efficiency of case management services and a system to manage data in a safe and accountable manner. It requires assessment, planning and resources once the case management system is in place. The case management guidelines provide the detailed guidance on how to set up a case management service.

Based on research, several protective and risk factors have been identified that influence the reintegration process.²⁰⁸

Protective factors

Pre-return

- Being recruited by an armed group or armed force supported by the community or that is perceived as a “winner”
- Kept regular contact with the family during the period of association
- Developed friendships with other children
- Being recruited with a sibling or a family member
- Short period of association
- Perception that it was an empowering experience

Risk factors

Pre-return

- Being recruited by an armed force or group perceived as the enemy, which has “lost” the war or that is designated as terrorist
- Presence of strong ideology in the armed group and indoctrination
- Experience of sexual abuse, rape, being married to a combatant
- Poor relationship with caregivers prior to enrolment, history of domestic violence and abuse
- Their role involved direct participation in hostilities
- Individual sense of loss of control over their lives
- Long period of time in the group (although not in all contexts)
- Witnessing beating or torture, violent death, being forced to kill, including family members, and to commit acts of violence
- Experience of permanent wound or injury
- Community fear and anger

Upon return

- Presence of loving caregivers, community and family acceptance
- Having a supportive partner
- Presence of supportive peer network, being in contact with other CAAFAG
- Presence of education and economic opportunities
- Availability of cultural supports (e.g. spiritual rituals)

Upon-return

- Poor relationship with caregivers, domestic violence, rejection by the family or loss of caregivers/parents
- Experience of rejection from the community
- Lack of economic and education opportunities
- Presence of aggressive and violent behaviour
- Presence of symptoms of distress and anxiety
- Presence of children born during the period of association
- Isolation from peers

206 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019)

207 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

208 Betancourt (2008)

Community-level approach

A community-level approach is a requirement to successfully reintegrate children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, particularly in communities where many children have been recruited. It complements the case management approach that focuses on the needs at the individual and at family level.

Exclusion from community events and interactions with peers are commonplace. This affects the children's confidence and capacity to rebuild a sense of belonging to their communities. Thus, girls and boys are co-existing rather than being genuinely integrated in their communities. In communities deeply affected by war, traditional social networks are weakened, which increases levels of fear and distrust. Community members may perceive CAAFAG as dangerous, as a threat to security and a threat to social norms.²⁰⁹ In addition, community-level approaches are more sustainable, appropriate and effective when rooted in existing structures, initiatives and local actors.

The level of community involvement may differ from one context to another. For the purposes of this toolkit, we will prioritise community-owned and managed activities, whether initiated by an external agency or from within the community. In the first option, traditional community systems and practices are identified during the context analysis and supported by an agency. For instance, cleansing and forgiveness ceremonies, involvement of traditional leaders in using their authority to advocate for child protection are supported through training, stipends, provision of materials, etc. In the second option, community organised activities such as security watch groups, livelihood initiatives, recreational activities receive some modest material support or a budget to improve or scale up their reach.

This approach builds on existing practices that are documented through the context analysis and strengthened, based on the recommendations from the community and children. In addition, this approach promotes the identification of key stakeholders based on their level of influence, documented in the stakeholder analysis and needs in the assessment.

Thus, religious leaders, local chiefs, traditional community leaders, women and youth leaders that support the reintegration of children and who have the power to influence CAAFAG social reintegration, for instance, may be involved.

In this approach, agencies facilitate discussion, using highly participatory and inclusive approaches and aiming to build trust and promoting community ownership.²¹⁰

For more information, see the [Reflective Field guide on Community-level Approaches to Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#).

Non-targeted approach:

A non-targeted approach prioritises non-targeted service provision instead of specific targeting of CAAFAG. The provision of services to all vulnerable children in affected communities will mitigate the risk of stigmatizing CAAFAG, as well as potential resentment from the host community against CAAFAG. The community may resent service provision only to former CAAFAG and may perceive it as rewarding perpetrators of violence, while other conflict affected children do not receive the same level of support. Non-targeted service provision may as well prevent recruitment of vulnerable children, give access to services for children, particularly girls, who do not want to disclose their association to access services and prevent further stigmatization.²¹¹

Multi-sectoral approach:

A multi-sectoral approach encourages the collaboration between organisations in various sectors and involving communities and people. Children's wellbeing includes various components that are all interlinked. Successful reintegration of CAAFAG responds holistically to the needs of children, involving other relevant sectors. Child Protection actors rarely have expertise in all sectors and should involve experts in health, economic recovery, justice, etc. as needed.

The diagram below is adapted from the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action domains of child wellbeing and highlights the main needs and thus sectors to consider and involve in CAAFAG reintegration programmes, namely Basic needs, Relationship with family and others, Safety and security and Agency. Additional needs may be considered based on individual situations and needs identified during case management assessment such as access to food, water, shelter, clothes, etc.

209 Tonheim (2017)

210 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

211 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)



Basic needs

Health includes psychosocial wellbeing, nutrition, reproductive health, addictions, impairments, etc.

Education encompasses formal and non-formal education.

Economic recovery focuses on financial autonomy for older children and includes vocational training, business skills, financial literacy, etc.

Safety and security

Safety & Care includes protection from violence and retaliation, alternative care and family tracing and reunification.

Justice may be considered in some contexts, it includes risks of arrest, protection during detention, legal documents, legal assistance and advocacy.

Relationship with family and others

Social belonging encompasses a new civilian identity and being socially accepted by family and community.

Agency

Education, specifically **life skills** promoting decision-making skills and empowerment of boys and girls to be active agents of their own lives.

4. Brainstorm reintegration interventions

Fourthly, brainstorm reintegration interventions using the information collected during the context analysis and the answers to the relevant research questions (*what are the challenges during reintegration; what are the existing practices to leverage and the recommendations from the children and community; how the roles and responsibilities, access and control of resources, safety, cultural and social norms can influence reintegration; and the criteria of successful reintegration*). The following table can help organize ideas and brainstorm reintegration programmes.

- Identify the needs for reintegration based on the context analysis and select relevant needs from the list provided. Add other relevant needs based on your context. Some may be gender or age-specific, or based on other factors such as the location or the recruiting armed group. A quality reintegration programme addresses multiple needs of children,

involving various sectors and considering all levels of the socio-ecological model.

- Based on this information collected during the context analysis, including the perspectives and views of young people and former CAAFAG and the examples of reintegration programmes, brainstorm interventions that could address the needs identified and promote the reintegration of children, including age and gender considerations.
- Consider risk and mitigation measures identified in the risk assessment to not do harm to children, communities and staff

The table below suggests a model to organize and present ideas with succinct examples of interventions. The table is using the levels of the socio-ecological framework, as well as the main needs to consider for the reintegration of CAAFAG.

Needs of CAAFAG						
	Health/MHPSS 	Education 	Safety & Care 	Justice 	Economic recovery 	Social belonging 
Approaches	Case management – Community level engagement – Multi-sector – Non-targeted					
Guiding question	How to identify and address CAAFAG health needs?	How to promote access to education?	How to promote CAAFAG safety and care?	How to ensure CAAFAG legal rights are respected?	How to support financial autonomy of older CAAFAG?	How to promote CAAFAG social reintegration?
Individual 	<p>Setup voluntary medical assessment</p> <p>Provision of health care, including nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support to children, including children with impairments or with disability</p> <p>Specific support for girls & boys survivors of sexual abuse, girls who had unsafe abortions and/or delivery</p>	<p>Provide a variety of opportunities to cater to needs of different profiles including formal and nonformal education opportunities, and life skills such as decision-making, emotion regulation skills, empowerment, etc.</p> <p>Provision of day care for child mothers to facilitate their access to education opportunities</p>	<p>Identify safety risk and establish individual safety plan, including relocation if relevant, through case management</p> <p>Identify interim care opportunities as relevant, with a priority for foster care including regular follow-ups</p>	<p>Provide legal assistance to support access legal documentation and promote the rights of CAAFAG in contact or in conflict with the law</p>	<p>Implement individual economic recovery assessment, provision of business skills, vocational training, financial literacy, on-the-job training, apprenticeship, entrepreneurship support, including cash assistance, saving-led microfinance, access to micro-credit, mentorship from established business men/ women</p> <p>Promote non-gender stereotyped trades if relevant and safe</p>	<p>Support transition to new civilian identity through individual counselling and/ or collective approaches</p>

Needs of CAAFAG

Health/MHPSS	Education	Safety & Care	Justice	Economic recovery	Social belonging
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Approaches: Case management – Community level engagement – Multi-sector – Non-targeted

Guiding question	How to identify and address CAAFAG health needs?	How to promote access to education?	How to promote CAAFAG safety and care?	How to ensure CAAFAG legal rights are respected?	How to support financial autonomy of older CAAFAG?	How to promote CAAFAG social reintegration?
 <p>Family</p>	<p>Involvement of the family if relevant (e.g. permanent impairment, chronic disease, etc.)</p> <p>Involve parent to promote psychosocial wellbeing (See Social belonging/ family)</p>	<p>Involvement of family to support access to education, such as economic recovery initiatives for parents to support children's education (See Economic recovery/ Family)</p>	<p>Involvement of family if their safety is at risk as well</p> <p>Implement family tracing and reunification programmes</p>		<p>Promote family support, access to family business network, economic support to family to provide for the needs of CAAFAG</p>	<p>Support family including caregivers and partners to provide a supportive and caring home environment through parenting skills sessions and group discussions</p>
 <p>Community</p>	<p>Strengthen community health care to address the needs of CAAFAG (assess impairment, be child sensitive, respect confidentiality, conduct clinical management of rape, address addictions, support sexual and reproductive health)</p>	<p>Build on existing community initiative, empower older youth to provide education opportunities</p>	<p>Reduce conflict through community peacebuilding initiatives</p> <p>Involve communities in the identification of foster families, interim care centre location if relevant</p>	<p>Promote safe identification and referral of children in need of legal assistance</p> <p>Train community para lawyers</p>	<p>Implement community market assessment to identify business opportunities</p> <p>Involve the community to support youth entrepreneurship (access to land, market, cooperative, etc)</p> <p>Promote youth-led community projects</p>	<p>Identify community members who can influence CAAFAG social reintegration for boys and girls</p> <p>Support community-led initiatives such as welcome or forgiveness ceremonies</p> <p>Promote community-led dialogues to improve acceptance, including youth-led initiatives</p> <p>Promote friendship through group activities (sports, art, etc.)</p>
 <p>Society</p>		<p>Advocate to MoE to improve access to education in remote areas</p> <p>Train teachers on gender-sensitive and non-violent teaching methods</p>	<p>Advocate for national reconciliation</p> <p>Involve the government in the provision of interim care options as relevant</p>	<p>Advocate to promote alternatives to detention, training of justice actors to promote respect of CRC</p>		<p>Advocate for CAAFAG acceptance, change of social norms</p>

Examples of reintegration interventions

The following examples are organized by sector or need rather than by socio-ecological levels. However, you will find information about the socio ecological level for each example.

Health and MHPSS

Key considerations

- Health and MHPSS interventions are part of children's basic needs, but they are also essential to safety and security, relationships with family and others and agency.
- Individuals who have experienced traumatic events are more likely to withdraw from their communities and to lose trust in them.^{212 213}
- Former CAAFAG may face challenges in defining their new identity as civilians²¹⁴, particularly if the armed group had a strong identity and ideology.²¹⁵
- Exposure to specific stress factors during warfare causes the “brain to develop along a stress-responsive pathway“. As a result, the brain develops capabilities for reacting quickly to threats in the form of intense anger, aggression or fear.²¹⁶
- Psychosocial wellbeing contributes to the successful reintegration of children. Programmes that do not address the psychosocial and psychological needs of children may not succeed.²¹⁷
- Feeling accepted by his/her community and parents is one of the strongest determinant of children's psychosocial wellbeing.²¹⁸
- Girls and boys who are survivors of sexual abuse and girls who are pregnant or have children born from sexual violence may need additional psychosocial support.

Recommendations

- Conduct voluntary medical screening and ensure that all information shared remains confidential. The medical screening should screen for impairments, wounds, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), addictions, nutrition, antenatal care, sexual and reproductive health and mental health.

- Train medical personnel on how to handle disclosure of GBV, clinical care of rape for boys and girls, on confidentiality, age- and gender-appropriate communication skills and referral to child protection services.
- Provide both collective and individual psychosocial activities that contribute to build a sense of belonging and collective identity, including specialized services delivered by professional mental health clinicians for children with trauma related symptoms.
- Extend psychosocial support to caregivers and partners.
- Involve boys and girls in identifying the best approaches to improve their psychosocial wellbeing.
- Address stigmatization in the community and in the family through community-led and culturally relevant initiatives such as welcome ceremonies and cleansing rituals. ([See social belonging p. 104](#))

Examples of programmes

Mental and psychosocial support programmes should consider the 4 levels of intervention of the IASC MHPSS pyramid.

1. **Basic services** (food, health and shelter) and security for everyone in the community.
2. **Community and family support** for a smaller number of people who are able to maintain their mental health and psychosocial well-being if they receive help in accessing key community and family support.
3. **Focused, non-specialised support** necessary for the smaller number of people who additionally require more focused individual, family or group interventions by trained and supervised workers (but who may not have had years of training in specialised care).
4. **Specialised services** required for the small percentage of the population whose suffering, despite the support already mentioned, is intolerable and who may have significant difficulties in basic daily functioning.

212 Dickson-Gomez (2002)

213 Banholzer (2014)

214 Tonheim (2017)

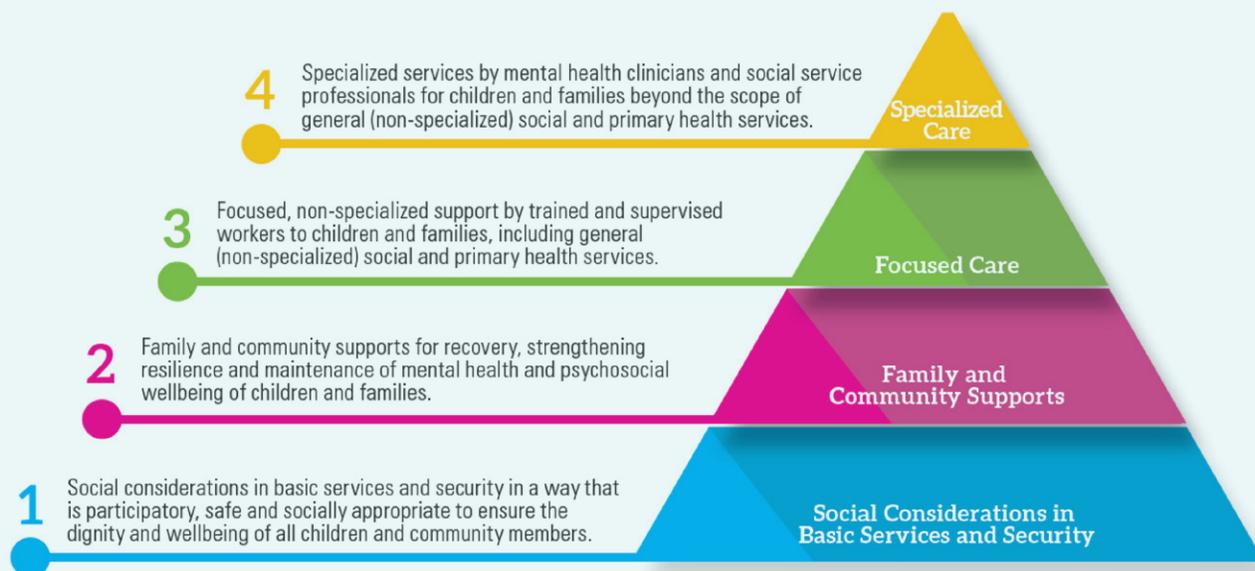
215 Vermeij (2011)

216 Schaueret al (2010)

217 Levy Paluck et al (2016)

218 Medeiros et al (2020)

219 McKay et al (2011)



Individual level

Collective approaches to promote girls' psychosocial wellbeing

In CAR, Plan International has used a group reintegration approach which has demonstrated positive outcomes. Anecdotal evidence and feedback from the girls in particular highlighted that group reintegration appears to have had a positive effect on the success of their reintegration. The girls could meet other girls who have similar experiences and form a support network in their community. The set-up of collective support mechanisms where girls can bond with each other to enhance their sense of belonging and collective identity has been highlighted as a promising practice. This lesson learnt is in line with findings from research on ex-GAAFAG in Liberia, Sierra Leone and northern Uganda.²¹⁹ The girls meet during regular sessions where trained facilitators acknowledge and validate their experience. In this way girls can express their feelings through various means such as art, drama, poems or photography, giving girls the ability to process their experience of violence. Experience has shown that the groups should not be too large, and the participants should remain in the same group to ensure enough trust between the girls.²²⁰

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual level - IASC: level 2 - 3)

Psychosocial support in Nepal

An evaluation of the CAAFAG reintegration programme in Nepal found that psychosocial support was one of the strongest components. Children had the opportunity to share their problems such as nightmares, fear of abduction, feelings of guilt, regret, losing face. Children experienced signs of anxiety such as restlessness,

aggression, difficulty in concentration, loss of appetite and irritation. Group and individual counselling sessions helped children to express their feelings and deep emotions and contributed to a change of behaviour. Children reported reduced negative thinking, enhanced self-confidence and feeling of greater community acceptance.²²¹

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual level – IASC: level 3)

Art-based approach to engage children born of sexual violence

Research in Northern Uganda used mask-making and drawing to engage girls and boys born in captivity. Art based approaches such as photography, video, theatre, music and visual art can provide a means to safely communicate about traumatic memories.

Art making workshops were held for 2 days to foster trust building between the participants. Using masks was culturally significant in Uganda and offered security and anonymity to explore difficult emotions and memories. First, the children helped each other to make masks with plaster-of-paris strips. Then facilitators asked participants to reflect on their past life while in captivity, their present living situation, and their hopes for the future. They could use feathers, flowers, rocks, pins, grass, leaves and other found objects. Each colour represented the past, present and future. Then, on a voluntary basis, they presented the significance of their mask. This approach allowed children to identify and select aspects of their experience they were comfortable sharing. In a second phase, they made two drawings, one mapping of their family and their living conditions while in captivity and one of their current situation.

220 Manero (2019)

221 Binadi et al (2011)

The children presented their masks and drawings to the community. It triggered powerful emotional impact from the community members and increased their desire to create social change.²²²

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual level - IASC: level 3)



Community level

Non-targeted psychosocial counselling group sessions in Nigeria

International Alert has implemented groups counselling sessions for girls, initially for CAAFAG only. Quickly, they revised their strategy as girls were stigmatized. They included other women and girls from the community and conducted mixed sessions. At the beginning of each session, facilitators reminded participants of confidentiality. Most communities know about the girls and this approach has led to positive outcomes, such as strengthened solidarity between CAAFAG and girls from the community.²²³

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual – Community levels - IASC: level 2)

Relief of guilt by religious leaders in South Sudan

In South Sudan, the acts of violence they were forced to commit or indirectly contributed to still haunted some girls. Many girls experienced more guilt and shame for what they have done, rather for what was done to them.

“I felt so bad when thinking that we were eating stolen food, it made me feel sad. To get our food, people got beaten and killed. I felt bad all the time.”

In South Sudan, religious leaders have the authority to relieve the ethical burden that affects their psychosocial wellbeing and their reintegration. One pastor supported dozens of girls and gave them absolution through prayers.

“I explain that we are all sinners and that God is ready to forgive us all, then I give absolution. Some want to confess publicly but it can also be done individually and quietly, for yourself.”²²⁴

(Socio-ecological framework: Community level - IASC: level 2)

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 22 - Mental Health and Psychosocial Reintegration Support
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Physical and Mental Health](#)



Education

Key considerations

- Access to education can contribute to the effective reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups into their families and communities by grounding the child in civilian life, promoting a sense of normality, increasing community acceptance and reducing vulnerability to re-recruitment.²²⁵
- Both formal and non-formal educational activities may contribute to strengthening self-esteem and help children regain a social value.
- CAAFAG may experience stigmatisation and discrimination from other classmates and teachers and may find it difficult to adapt to the school environment. Girls are often particularly affected due to their presumed sexual activity.
- During conflict, schools may be unsafe, used for military purpose and be deliberately attacked or threatened. They may be used by armed groups for recruitment purposes or to diffuse political or religious ideology. Schools may also be closed due to the conflict or a disease outbreak.

Recommendations

- Involve boys and girls in identifying the best approaches to improve their access to education and respond to their needs in terms of knowledge and skills.
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can be integrated into education programming to help CAAFAG process their experiences.
- Conflict dynamics may impact learning environments. Teachers and other education personnel should be trained in the principles of conflict sensitive education.

222 A Green et al (2019)

223 Information collected from key informant

224 UNICEF (2019)

225 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

226 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

227 De la Soudière (2017)

- Consider combining education, vocational training, and livelihood opportunities for older children.
- Consider livelihood support for parents to support children's education in a more sustainable manner or support for Parents and Teachers associations with income-generating activities.
- Provide a combination of individual and collective support to a school that can benefit other vulnerable children in the community instead of exclusively individual support, including waivers of registration fees in exchange for support for teacher training and school rehabilitation.
- Ensure a safe and protective environment at school for girls through safety assessment, risk mitigation plan and training of teachers in gender-response teaching methodologies, positive discipline, inclusion of children with disabilities, conflict-sensitive education, and on understanding the psychological needs of children affected by conflict. This may also include gender and inclusion-sensitive infrastructures.
- Provide child care for girls with young children and support to pregnant girls to allow them to access education
- Provide life skills programmes, including girls' empowerment programmes to promote reintegration and strengthen children's resilience
- Provide access to *civil* registry, identification documents to facilitate education entry pathways.
- Provide access to alternative learning opportunities such as accelerated education, distance learning, community-based education, and access to temporary learning spaces.
- Promote advocacy to prevent and reduce military use and attacks on schools that endanger children.
- Organize *back to school campaigns* for children formerly associated with armed groups.
- Flexible and alternative education pathways such as accelerated learning, transitional education, catch-up, basic literacy, and numeracy.
- Non-formal education that leads to equivalent and certified competencies.
- Integrated education and psychosocial support programmes.
- Teacher training programmes.
- Life skills training.
- Community-level education.²²⁶



Individual level

Education to support reintegration of ex-CAAFAG girls in DRC

Child Soldiers International has conducted research on girls associated with armed forces and armed groups in DRC, and more specifically on the drivers of a successful reintegration. Ex-GAAFAG (Girls associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups) massively reported access to education and having a diploma as a key element to rebuilding their self-confidence and social value. As a result, Child Soldiers International implemented an education project for GAAFAG to support their school reintegration. Through the project, girls were supported to go back to school or to join a basic literacy and numeracy programme for those who were older, who had never been enrolled in school or who had been out of school for a long time. Girls received a school kit and fees were paid directly to the schools. Other at-risk girls who had not been associated received the same support. Local civil society staff or community-based volunteer network members received support to monitor the girls' attendance and organise regular listening sessions to address any challenges they may have.

The project outcome contributed to improve community acceptance and allowed ex-GAAFAG to interact with other girls and regain the status of "schoolgirls" as opposed to "bush girls" or "child soldiers". The project was flexible to accommodate unexpected needs of girls. Some girls formed small business groups to generate an income for their family besides school attendance and received further training to support them, while other girls reached the third year of university.²²⁷

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual)

Examples of education programmes

- Support to return to formal education, including remedial learning and catch-up programmes to target specific needs of former CAAFAG.
- Work with Ministries of Education to develop and support reintegration pathways that help CAAFAG return to formal education.

Education programme for CAAFAG in Nepal

The education programmes in Nepal included both individual and structural support. Individual support included tuition fees, student kit, and uniforms. The evaluation of the programme highlighted that educational support had a positive impact on children, it helped them to enrol and to stay in school. It also helped children to feel more confident in their school and to take part in other activities in the children's clubs. Structural support encompassed small funding amounts allocated to schools to benefit other vulnerable children in the communities. This support was appreciated by schools and communities and helped other children to return to school.²²⁸

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual – Community levels)



Community level

Community-level education during the Syrian conflict

Soon after the conflict began in Syria in 2011, communities “have begun responding to the crisis by developing local mechanisms for educating children in non-government controlled areas. Local civilian councils and activist groups have established nonformal community schools in mosques and private homes in areas where schools were destroyed or where it was no longer safe to attend school”.²²⁹ One in four schools was no longer operational because they have been damaged, destroyed or used to shelter internally displaced people or by armed groups in the conflict.

With the support of the international community, nonformal education was provided to children, which led to recognized and certified competencies. Support for a unified Syrian certification and accreditation system allowed children to receive education in Non-government controlled areas and to attend formal exams recognized by the government in Damascus.²³⁰

(Socio-ecological framework: Community level)



Society – government – NGO level

Collaboration with the Ministries of Social Welfare and Education in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the lack of education opportunities was identified as a driver to recruitment into the MILF armed group. UNICEF reintegration programme conducted Family Needs Assessments which identified access to education, health and livelihood as priority needs for disengaged children and their siblings. UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Social Services and Development and the Ministry of Basic and Higher Technical Education to ensure

improved access to social welfare and education in remote areas where CAAFAG were recruited. They supported families with cash assistance and seeds to generate an income so they could afford school fees and transportation costs. UNICEF combined a community approach in increasing education opportunities with a family approach to support access to education for all children in the family rather than individual needs. This strategy served as a prevention and a response intervention.²³¹

(Socio-ecological framework: Family – Community – Society levels)

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 24 - Education Support for Reintegration
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Education](#)
- [INEE \(2013\) Conflict Sensitive Education Pack](#)



Safety & Care

Key considerations

- Following their release, children may have various needs and may need individual support through case management.
- Children may be at risk of violence in the home, gender-based violence, re recruitment, retaliation or arrest.
- Recruitment and use of children is a major cause of family separation in armed conflict. Children may need support in family tracing and reunification.
- Former CAAFAG in detention may also need support to trace their family members and to be reunified upon their release.
- Some children will require temporary care arrangements during the family tracing process or because they may face risks in their home such as risks of retaliation, re-recruitment, etc.
- Temporary care arrangements may also support children in their transition from the armed force or group to civilian life.

228 Binadi et al (2011)

229 Thompson et al (2014)

230 Information collected from key informant

231 United Nations and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. (2017)

Recommendations

- Establish a case management programme to assess and responds to the needs of children using the [inter-agency case management guidelines](#). (See [Case management approach p.88](#))
- Assess the risks to the safety of the child during the case management process and establish a safety plan to address them. This may include relocation to a safer place where children will find greater anonymity.
- Establish a foster care system for unaccompanied CAAFAG. Prioritise foster care, particularly for girls. Place two girls in one foster family to enhance their sense of protection and the success of their reintegration.²³² Train foster families before they foster any child and set up foster parent support groups with regular meetings to share challenges, lessons learnt and identify solutions collectively. Make provision for regular monitoring and community-based care.
- Consider independent living arrangements in contexts where it is culturally appropriate, with two or three adolescents in one accommodation unit, preferably ex-CAAFAG who know each other. Identify and train respected community members who live nearby as mentors to provide support to the children and regular monitoring.
- Only consider interim care centres in locations where foster families, kinship care or independent living opportunities are not available or are not in the best interests of the child.
- Involve boys and girls in identifying the best approaches to alternative care.

Examples of programmes

- Case management for CAAFAG and for other protection concerns to not stigmatize them.
- Alternative care arrangements such as foster families and independent living. Only consider interim care centre as a last resort.
- Family tracing and reunification programme, including a preparation phase for the family before the reintegration.



Individual level

Mobility Mapping: a useful technique to gain information from children

“A historical mobility map is a child’s mental picture of his or her life before separation translated onto paper. The mobility dimension comes into play by asking a child to show in the picture places where he or she used to go. Although the actual drawing can be used to identify and decipher tracing clues, the map’s primary purpose is to stimulate the child’s memory and generate discussion between the child and a tracing worker. Using the map, a tracing worker can explore diverse topics, and most times, draw out information useful for radio tracing and active field tracing. Maps often reveal a child’s daily tasks (chores and play) and significant relationships, as well as distinctive local features, structures, or geographic characteristics. They can reveal nicknames, places frequently visited, and favourite memories. Even when the information revealed does not lead to reunification, it can provide children with knowledge about where they came from and important emotional connections with their past.”²³³

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual level)



Family level

Lessons learnt from alternative care in DRC

In DRC, alternative care arrangements for CAAFAG included both Interim Care Centres (ICC - Centre d’Orientation et de Transit) and foster families (Famille d’Accueil Transitoires), based on the locations. The programme evaluation highlighted the positive impact of foster families who organized themselves as associations. Lessons learnt highlight the importance of day care centres where children can access activities, close monitoring with case workers (“*référénts*”), a holistic approach including various actors and ongoing support to foster families. Foster families are part of the discussions with children about their reintegration plan. This approach was also successful to prevent rebellions of children, targeted attacks from the armed group, and demonstrations from community members against the reintegration of CAAFAG.

The evaluation of the interim care centres underlined that ICC personnel were not all appropriately trained to manage former CAAFAG. This led to negligence and maltreatment, a lack of individual support and no clear perspective on their future. Additionally, experience showed that the high number of children in one centre was a factor in behavioural problems, and increased difficulty in managing the children.²³⁴

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual - Family levels)

²³² The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

²³³ De Lay (2002)

²³⁴ Bodineau (2011)

Case management programmes in Nepal

In Nepal, the case management approach included an assessment of the families and the neighbourhood and the setting up of a safety net comprising five to seven community members living in the neighbourhood, before reuniting children with their family. The preparation of the family and child was very important to create the right foundation for a successful reintegration. The families received livelihood support based on their needs, and the children were registered in school. However, the caseworkers felt the monitoring limited to two years after the reintegration was not long enough to ensure the success of the reintegration.²³⁵

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual – Family levels)

Community level Lessons learnt from case management and family tracing and reunification programmes in Sudan

In Sudan/South Sudan, DDR programmes went through multiple phases, with various approaches to social work and case management. One of the approaches, known as Phase II relied exclusively on the capacity of the community environment to protect children. Children were reintegrated in their families without systematic follow up and monitoring, and with no record of who had returned where. Preliminary finding of an evaluation of this community-based approach highlighted that CAAFAG may not have benefited from reintegration support as it was not targeted enough and many fell through the gaps. However, this community approach was more successful in tracing families. The Family Tracing Network in South Kordofan seemed to be effective in tracing families through school teachers, without the need of social workers. The evaluation report highlights that follow up of children who have been reintegrated in their families should build on local child protection committees and prioritise social workers only for the most vulnerable children.²³⁶

(Socio-ecological framework: Community levels)

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook
 - Chapter 18 - Case Management
 - Chapter 19 - Alternative care
 - Chapter 20 - Family Tracing, Reunification and Follow up
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Safety and Care - Alternative care](#)

- [Unaccompanied and Separated Children Working Group \(2013\) The Alternative Care in Emergencies Toolkit](#)
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2016\) The handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children and \(2017\) The Toolkit on Unaccompanied and Separated Children](#)
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2014\) The inter-agency guidelines for case management and child protection](#)



Justice

Key considerations

- CAAFAG may be in contact with the justice system as alleged offender, witness or victim.
- Their association with an armed group designated as terrorist often increases the risk of discriminatory treatment and failure to meet international judicial standards and the respect for child rights.²³⁷
- Children in detention are at high risk of being tortured or subjected to other ill-treatment or coercion when interrogated.²³⁸
- The long-term impact of not accessing reintegration support can be significant, leading to social exclusion, marginalisation, undermining efforts for social cohesion, community development and child protection.²³⁹

Recommendations

- Train lawyers and legal assistants on humanitarian laws, international norms and treaties and national legislation in relation to access to justice, children associated with armed forces and armed groups and terrorism-related laws if relevant.
- Advocate for the respect for child rights and international standards. [\(see Legal and normative framework on p.17\)](#)
- Promote restorative justice mechanism including reintegration and rehabilitation measures instead of prosecution and detention.

235 Binadi et al (2011)

236 Halton (2011)

237 O'Neil S, Van Broeckhoven K (2018)

238 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

239 Clara Pretus et al (2018)

Involve boys and girls in contact with the justice system in identifying the best approaches to ensuring the respect of their rights and to promote their reintegration.

Examples of programmes

- Training programmes for justice actors on the international legal framework.
- Advocacy to the Ministry of Justice and Interior to prioritise restorative justice mechanisms over detention of CAAFAG.
- Provision of legal assistance to children and their families to reduce the duration of detention, support access to civil documentation (birth certificate, marriage certificate, etc.)



Individual level

Legal support to children associated with Islamic State in Iraq

In Iraq, until 2019 Heartland Alliance International provided legal assistance to girls and boys suspected of affiliation with Islamic State. Most girls were arrested due to their status as wives, daughters or sisters of alleged Islamic State fighters. A team of two female lawyers interviewed girls, provided legal consultation and legal representation at the juvenile court in Ninewa. Their intervention contributed to the release of 80 girls and boys and the reductions of sentences to one year of detention. They also provided psychosocial support, built a hall for recreational activities and a building for family visits at the detention centre. After the release of children, the organisation monitored the reintegration of adolescents through psychosocial and legal support as well as referral to health and education actors.²⁴⁰

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual level)

Advocacy for appropriate care of CAAFAG in detention in Chad

In Chad in March 2014, ICRC and UNICEF identified 44 children detained amongst a group of 248 combatants from the Central African Republic armed groups 'Seleka'. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Social Welfare to remove these children from the prison and transport them to a transitional care center, while family tracing was carried out in coordination with ICRC to identify their relatives back in CAR. However, there were some tensions between seeking to separate the children from other adult combatants, and seeking to preserve family unity.

240 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

241 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

For instance, a 17 year old girl was the wife of a general, aged 45, and had a two-year-old child. UNICEF staff talked to the girl apart from the general to understand her wishes. A solution was found to relocate the girl and her child to stay with relatives who lived close to the prison where the general was in jail. They were able to maintain contact while awaiting the outcome of the general's trial.

In another case, a child was detained together with his adult relative. After some discussion with the child, the relative and the authorities, the adult relative was moved to another prison closer to the interim care centre, where the child would stay during the tracing of other family members. UNICEF supported the child and relative to maintain contact.²⁴¹

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual level)



Society – government – NGO level

Children's participation in transitional justice in Colombia

In Colombia, it is important for national reconciliation and for the reintegration of children, that perpetrators are held accountable for their offences. Reconciliation was embedded into justice and rule of law initiatives with the aim to move the country out of conflict. The National Historical Memorial Centre was established to strengthen transitional justice efforts. It included the Observatory of Memory and Conflict, which collected testimonies of former members of armed groups, including former CAAFAG, on their perspectives of the conflict and suggestions on what needs to change. The purpose is not to establish the truth as would do a truth commission, but rather reaffirm the dignity and humanity of all victims to the conflict. Armed forces are also involved in this process, and they are progressively more open to acknowledge the institution's wrongdoings. The impact on the perception of armed forces and the consolidation of peace is yet to be evaluated, however, this is a first step in healing deep wounds.^{242 243}

(Socio-ecological framework: Society level)

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook
 - Chapter 25 - Addressing Impunity for Child Recruitment and Use
 - Chapter 26 - Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups in Justice Systems

242 Observatorio de Memoria y Conflicto, <http://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/observatorio/>

243 Schultze-Kraft (2017)

- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Safety and Care – Legal support](#)



Economic recovery

Key considerations

- Current reintegration programmes appear to offer the choice of education, whether returning to school or catch up classes, or vocational training. There are little opportunities to combine both of them.
- The training courses provided are often focused on availability of trades and ease of implementation rather than on relevance to the context and usefulness to children to generate income in the long term.²⁴⁴ There is also an excessive focus on skills gaps, often neglecting skills that youth already have and their aspirations.
- Availability, access and management of natural resources can lead to conflict or affect economic recovery interventions, such as access to land and water for agriculture programmes.
- Evaluations of livelihood projects have demonstrated positive psychosocial outcomes, but more rarely effective financial self-sufficiency. The lack of expertise of child protection actors,²⁴⁵ the absence of prior market assessments, the lack of business-management skills training, access to financial resources and professional networks have largely contributed to this situation.

Recommendations

- Involve livelihood actors to implement economic recovery programmes or to train child protection actors in delivering quality and sustaining livelihood programmes^{247 248}
- Conduct localised and individualized labour assessment to assess market opportunities in children's communities²⁴⁹
- Consult boys and girls to understand their skills, their wishes and the best approaches to improve financial self-sufficiency.
- Consider providing livelihood support to the family so they can provide for their children²⁵⁰
- Explore combination of livelihood and education opportunities²⁵¹, and several progressive skills training phases to allow children to prioritise short-term training opportunities and continue building their skills overtime to access better job opportunities in a second phase²⁵²

- Provide financial literacy and business skills, including how to resist pressure from family and friends with and access to micro-credit and saving schemes.²⁵³ Trainings can be embedded into education programmes through entrepreneurship clubs, saving clubs, etc.
- Provide regular business monitoring visits²⁵⁴ pre- and post-training support to deal with the realities of entrepreneurship.²⁵⁵
- Encourage groups of young people to open their business together and offer group support²⁵⁶
- Consider a long-term and sustainable mentoring approach with established businesswomen/men in their community to build a connection with adults in the community and receive support²⁵⁷
- Consider providing child care for girls with children to ensure equal access²⁵⁸

Examples of programmes

- Apprenticeship, traineeship and internship schemes
- Income-generation schemes
- Cash transfers
- Cash-for-work and Food-for-work
- Financial education
- Agricultural development
- Loan-led microfinance
- Savings-led microfinance²⁵⁹
- Job development
- Value chain development
- Small business support²⁶⁰



Individual level

Agriculture activities: lessons learnt

Lessons learnt from the DDR programme in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan highlight the importance of an agricultural package for young people who choose agricultural activities. The agricultural package should include tools and vouchers for seeds and fertilizers, have enough start-up capital (through humanitarian or State Social Assistance) and be implemented in contexts where there is access to cultivable land. In Liberia, an evaluation of

the DDR programme documented that former combatants who returned to the countryside and opted for agriculture were over time more self-sustainable and integrated better in their communities than those who remained in Monrovia and opted for vocational training. Vocational scheme included trades such as carpentry and motor mechanics for which there was limited market demand. Thus, too many people were competing for few opportunities.^{261 262}

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual level)

Education and Livelihood in Nepal

An evaluation of the DDR programme in Nepal found that combining education and livelihood support was an effective strategy for successful reintegration of older children. However, more support was needed through additional training, regular monitoring of the business and business plans to ensure effective income generation.²⁶³

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual)

Non-traditional female trade

In Syria, a girl benefited from vocational training, qualified in electronics, and opened a shop. The community did not accept her in this role and refused to buy from her shop. She finally asked her brother to interact with customers while she ran the business behind the scenes.²⁶⁴

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual)

Livelihood support in CAR

In CAR, Plan International provided livelihood support to girls who were associated with armed forces and armed groups. Options were limited to five or six selected trades based on a market assessment and the availability of materials, which can vary from one community to another. Thus, girls were trained in soap-making, bread and cake baking, motorbike mechanics, tailoring and hairdressing, and some opened a cafeteria. Plan International identified master artisans, trained them in child protection, on communication skills and on how to interact with CAAFAG. Each artisan then signed a child-safeguarding protocol before receiving children. Girls with children could access day-care centres while they were

attending vocational training. In addition, the girls benefited from small business management training, functional literacy, life skills and sexual and reproductive health education.²⁶⁵

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual)

Livelihood support and gender equality in Iraq

In Iraq, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) worked with Yazidi young women who were kidnapped by Islamic State. They conducted a vocational orientation and screening process based on young women's business ideas. These included trades such as knitting, yogurt-making, sewing clothes, beauty care, making wedding music, and artistic painting. They each received training in business management skills, materials to start their business and support from counsellors to navigate the market. The business success rate reached 70%. This initiative was coupled with activities that promoted gender equality. For instance, young Yazidi women organised gender-equality awareness raising and advocacy events. In addition, NPA organised peer-support groups for men and women separately to discuss GBV issues, gender norms and physical and emotional violence against women and girls. The combination of the two initiatives contributed to create a more protective environment for girls and young women survivors at home and in their community. Additionally, young women could benefit from GBV case management, mental health counselling, and material support.²⁶⁶

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual)

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 23 - Economic Strengthening for Reintegration
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Financial self-sufficiency](#)
- [The CPC learning network. Women's Refugee Commission \(2014\) What do we know about economic strengthening for family reintegration of separated children?](#)

244 Ozerdem et al (2011)

245 UNICEF Nepal (2008)

246 Mazurana & Eckerbom Cole (2012)

247 UNICEF Nepal (2008)

248 Mazurana & Eckerbom Cole (2012)

249 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

250 Ozerdem et al (2011)

251 Binadi et al (2011)

252 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

253 International Labour Organization-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour ILO-IPEC (2010)

254 Binadi et al (2011)

255 ILO (2010)

256 Key informant

257 Key informant

258 Ibid

259 This includes Rotating Saving and Credit Association (ROSCAs), Village Savings and Loan Associations (VASLAs), Saving and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs)

260 Chaffin et al 2013

261 Maclay and Özerdem, 2010

262 Ozerdem et al (2011)

263 Binadi et al (2011)

264 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

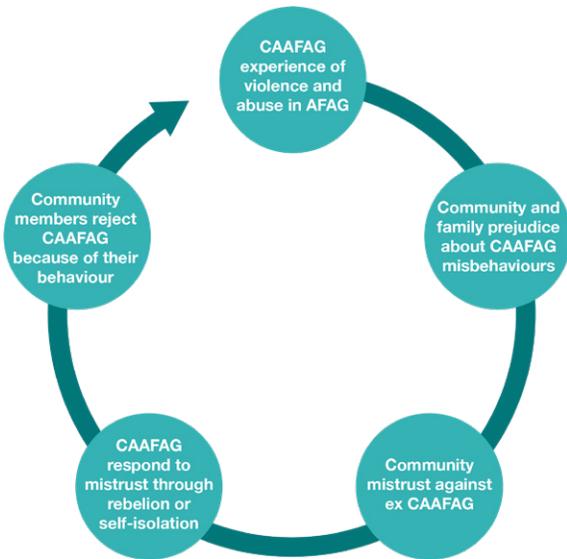
265 Ibid

266 Ibid



Social belonging

Vicious cycle of stigma and rejection



Key considerations

- The family plays an essential role in the success of the reintegration process, however family members not responding in a caring manner may be particularly detrimental.
- Family distrust may have an impact on the wellbeing and behaviour of children and young people, sometimes leading to a vicious cycle of stigma and rejection. (See diagram above) Children start acting according to the family and community's negative expectations, thus reinforcing these stereotypes, leading to increasing stigma and preventing the child's reintegration.²⁶⁷
- Community acceptance and meaningful community engagement and supports are essential components of social reintegration of children.
- Civilian communities often distrust and fear for child soldiers even years after the end of the war.
- In some contexts, community level approaches, such as traditional cleansing ceremonies, contributed to repair relationships with their families and communities and helped children by realigning their well-being with spiritual beliefs of death and rebirth.²⁶⁸ Communities and children themselves often know what will help children be accepted by their family and community.

Recommendations

- Prepare the families and partners if relevant ahead of the reunification to reduce the discrimination children face upon their return.

- Provide parenting skills programmes, including psychosocial support for family and partners to improve their acceptance, their psychosocial recovery and contribute to a caring home environment.
- Identify and promote existing local initiatives of influential community figures such as religious leaders, chiefs of villages or women and youth leaders that promote social acceptance.
- Consult boys and girls to identify the best approaches to improve their social integration.
- Encourage exchange of ideas and promising practices that support CAAFAG community reintegration via community leaders from various locations.
- Promote the participation of youth in community activities, including former CAAFAG when it is safe to do so.

Examples of programmes

- Youth-led initiatives to interact with the community and show how children and youth can play a positive role and contribute to community life.
- Preparation of the family and communities through community dialogues allowing families and communities to express concerns and highlighting the needs of children to recover to be able to contribute positively to the community.
- Identification and promotion of organic community initiatives, traditional rituals, which promote community acceptance.
- Empowerment of local actors who have the power to influence community acceptance.
- Edutainment initiatives that promote a change of social norms and strengthen community acceptance.



Individual – Community levels Drama-play by GAAFAG

In Uganda, Sierra Leone and Liberia, a participatory study has involved girls with children who were associated with AFAG to understand the challenges they face in their reintegration. One of the main issues highlighted was the rejection by the community. The study allowed girls to implement a small project as a group to facilitate their reintegration. Some groups started a collective income-generating activity with land provided by the committee. Some other groups decided to role-play a drama that highlighted how community members treated them upon

their return, and the isolation they faced. Across all groups, girls reported a behaviour change of community members towards them: they were coming forward more easily to talk to them.²⁶⁹

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual – Community levels)

Cleansing ceremonies

Cleansing ceremonies, which are not harmful to the children, were very successful to promote reintegration and lessen psychosocial distress in contexts such as South Sudan, DRC, Mozambique and Nepal. In communities with a communitarian vision of death, illness and healing, traditional healing may make a socially acceptable return possible. This process is “meant to spiritually realign wellbeing with the social world and discard identities and habits imbibed in the fighters’ world”.²⁷⁰ Through traditional rituals, girls and boys were cleared of their sin and as a result could not carry bad luck to the community. The rituals included pacification of ancestors’ spirits or the spirits of the people they killed. The cleansing ritual can be critical for girls who are survivors of sexual abuse and to ensure community acceptance. The effectiveness of the rituals has mixed outcomes and seems to be more effective with children who believe in it.²⁷¹

(Socio-ecological framework: Individual - Community level)



Family level

Parents Make the Difference

In Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, the International Rescue Committee implemented Parents Make the Difference, a parenting skills programme for parents of adolescents at risk of recruitment and parents of adolescents formerly recruited. Through a series of 13 sessions, the programme aims at improving parent’s stress management skills, positive parenting practices, communication skills using empathy and strategies for supporting adolescents with behavioural issues and psychosocial needs such as stress and anxiety. In addition, they received information about the risks girls and boys are exposed to during their association with armed groups and the difficulties they may face upon return. Thus, parents were better equipped to prevent the (re)recruitment of their children and to support their reintegration.²⁷²

(Socio-ecological framework: Family level)



Community level

A radio drama series in Nigeria

In Nigeria, Search for Common Ground and UNICEF designed a radio programme using the edutainment approach, a combination of education and entertainment, to increase community acceptance of women and children formerly associated with non-state armed groups. The radio drama series depicted the life of CAAFAG, their difficulties in reintegrating back into their communities and the socioeconomic challenges they face. Additional issues were raised due to COVID-19, their dignity and issues of social cohesion. The episodes last 15 minutes and were aired every week on local FM radio in Borno State. A roundtable with guest speakers followed each episode to further discuss issues raised during the series. Community members could call to ask questions and participate in the discussion. Feedback from participants in the roundtables highlighted a positive response from community members, caregivers, and community leaders. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the radio programme contributed to behaviour change such as increased acceptance of GAAFAG going back to school.²⁷³

(Socio-ecological framework: Community level)

Community-based approaches to social reintegration in CAR

In Central African Republic, Save the Children has supported community-based child protection committees to facilitate community dialogue in schools and community discussion sessions to raise awareness about the experience of CAAFAG. Children associated with armed groups faced a lot of challenges, including stigmatization, and social and economic exclusion.

One approach was to hold screenings of films such as “Ezra”, a film depicting the story of a child recruited into an armed group in Sierra Leone. He was forced to kill his own family and attacked his own village. He then tried to go back home after the war. After the screening, committee members asked for reflections on the film and encouraged discussion about different attitudes of community members towards reintegration. They asked children if they would exclude or be friends with this child if he came home to their village. “Forgiving” and “accepting” children who have been associated with armed forces and armed groups was raised during discussions, along with the responsibility of the community for being unable to protect their children during the crises.²⁷⁴

(Socio-ecological framework: Community level)

267 Child Soldier International : Guide pratique pour promouvoir l’acceptation communautaire des filles associées aux groupes armés en RDC

268 Ozerdem et al (2011)

269 Worthen et al (2011)

270 Ozerdem et al (2011)

271 Betancourt (2008)

272 Kazingufu, participant to parenting skills session in DRC

273 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

274 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

Community dialogues in Nigeria

In Nigeria, Search for Common Ground organized transformative community dialogues, involving Community Based Child Protection Committees, community members, the local militia CJTF (Civilian Joint Task Force) members, religious leaders and other community leaders. The sessions are sometimes separated by gender, based on local culture. The focus of the discussions is on community acceptance, the challenges that children face, rejection by the community, particularly for children who were associated with Boko Haram. In some instances, children self-isolate because of guilt and discrimination, and it is a risk factor for re-recruitment. In locations where children are enrolled with local militias such as CJTF, CAAFAG are involved in the community dialogue on a voluntary basis. These children do not face stigma, they are already accepted by the community, but their testimonies are powerful and trigger empathy for all CAAFAG. Some parents are not aware of what their children have been through, and this approach serves children associated with CJTF and their family, and by extension children associated with Boko Haram.²⁷⁵

(Socio-ecological framework: Community level)

Religious leaders involvement in community acceptance

In Iraq, Islamic State specifically targeted the Yazidi women and girls for sexual abuse and exploitation. Upon their return, girls were at risk of exclusion from the Yazidi society. Women's rights activists along with other human rights actors actively advocated to the Yazidi Spiritual Council to welcome back women and girls kidnapped by Islamic State. In April 2014, a fatwa was issued by religious leaders that preserved the dignity and the protection of women and girl survivors of rape. They declared they could be "religiously purified" and accepted since they were raped and enslaved against their will. Unfortunately, despite ongoing advocacy, the fatwa was not extended to their children born out of rape during their captivity.²⁷⁶ In Nigeria, religious leaders actively advocated for the reintegration of girls. They encouraged the acceptance of girls and their children born during captivity, based on verses from the Quran.²⁷⁷

(Socio-ecological framework: Community– Society levels)

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook
 - Chapter 21 - Planning and Delivering Reintegration Programmes
 - Chapter 27 - Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2020\) Technical Note on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Group – Social reintegration](#)

B. Monitoring

Monitoring is a key component of project design. The development of a logframe, including indicators and means of verification will be essential to measure progress against outputs and outcomes indicators.

Development of culturally sensitive indicators

How to develop indicators?

Indicators are a quantitative or qualitative variable that provide a valid and reliable way to measure achievement, assess performance, or reflect changes connected to an intervention. It is a number, proportion, percentage or rate that helps to measure – or to indicate – the extent to which planned activities have been conducted (*output* indicators) and programme achievements have been made (*outcome* indicators).

They can also be used to show the progress that is being made towards achieving an outcome related to a specific standard or standards. They provide a way of measuring and communicating the processes and results of key actions.

Output indicators measure the direct, immediate-term results of an activity, or in other words, what the intervention has achieved in the short-term. They add more details in relation to the 'output' of the activity. Outputs generally include the number of support or service interactions received by a beneficiary of a particular programme, as well as the products or goods that result from an intervention. For instance, the number of CAAFAG who accessed case management services, the number of parents of CAAFAG who participated in parenting skills sessions or the number of community-based child protection mechanisms established.

Outcome indicators are a specific and measurable variable that will represent the achievement or failure of the outcome. It relates to the change that results from an intervention in the short-, medium- or long-term. These indicators enable us to know whether the desired outcome has been generated.²⁷⁸

An outcome indicator should indicate the progress towards the standard as a result of the implementation of key actions or the extent to which the standard was reached; in other words whether progress against the standard was achieved. It differs from the standard in

that it specifies the change that is needed and identified in measurable elements. It is the change that is expected as a result of an intervention. For instance, indicators of change in behaviour, attitude or knowledge among a program's participants, or policy, or children's access and use of services are considered outcome indicators. For example, the percentage of children who report improvement in their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing after their reintegration or the number of CAAFAG who are successfully reintegrated after one year of support. In this last example, the criteria of "successful reintegration" should be developed. Outcome indicators often require the development of a set of criteria, scales, and/or measurement tools.

Indicators are developed based on the objectives identified during programme design. They should include a mix of output and outcome indicators to monitor the quality of programme as well as the delivery of the service.

Use the **SMART** process to develop quality indicators following the criteria below:

Specific: the indicator should indicate clearly what will be achieved. Avoid vague terms such as improve or effective.

Measurable: is it possible to collect data for this indicator in a conflict context? Do you have the expertise, staff, and time to collect the data?

Achievable: Is it realistic to expect the target to be reached within the timeframe, based on the resources you have? For outcome indicators, is it possible to measure a change during the project period? Avoid ambitious targets that will make the project look like a failure if they are not met.

Relevant: Does the indicator really capture the change you described as your output or outcome?

Time-bound: When will the indicator will be achieved?²⁷⁹

How to contextualize indicators?

Some outcome indicators require the involvement of former CAAFAG and community members to define criteria. Concepts of release, reintegration and wellbeing, are usually based on Western concepts which may not resonate with a culturally based understanding of war-related events. Children are not passive victims, they actively interpret and give a meaning to their experience. Communities "have their own priorities for improving their life, and their own ways of identifying impact indicators and measuring change".²⁸⁰

Thus, the perspective of the community and of children should be considered when designing key outcome indicators related to release and reintegration.

Findings for the following research questions from the context analysis will help you develop criteria for outcome indicators related to release and reintegration.

9. How are boys and girls released (formal vs informal modes of release), are there differences according to their age/gender/ ethnicity or other characteristic?
10. How can the humanitarian community support existing practices from families and communities and contribute to the safe release of boys and girls?
12. How can the humanitarian community contribute to the safe and successful reintegration of boys and girls, considering safety and care, social reintegration, health and mental health and economic reintegration?
13. What are the criteria of a successful reintegration for boys and girls?

These research questions should have been selected during the first phase of the context analysis based on knowledge gaps.

During the context analysis, the consultation of former CAAFAG during workshops (see [Context analysis p. 33](#)) and through KII provides the framework to collect relevant data to respond to the research questions listed above, using a participatory approach. In particular, the session 4.3 Brainstorming release processes and 5.3 Diamond ranking of attributes of doing well, will help you define criteria for release which distinguish disengagement and deidentification, and criteria for reintegration, from the perspective of CAAFAG.

Information collected through the needs assessment tools will also provide information about the community members' perception and definition of release and successful reintegration.

In addition, a participative ranking method can be used to collect these information items from community members. This method developed by Columbia University was used in Sierra Leone to identify successful reintegration criteria from the perspective of girls formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups. The approach associates key principles of the focus group approach and participatory appraisal activities (ranking).

275 Information collected from key informant

276 Rohwerder (2019)

277 Monguno et al (2016)

278 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)

279 [IndiKit Rapid guide to design SMART indicators](#)

280 Catley et al. (2008)

During focus-group discussions, the facilitators ask the participants for their interpretation of what it meant for a girl to be successfully reintegrated. A similar exercise was done with indicators of “poor” reintegration. Thus, girls identified emotional and financial support from their family as the most important indicator of “good reintegration” and no income-generating activities as the most important indicator of “poor” reintegration.²⁸¹

You can find additional information on how to contextualize indicator criteria in [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2021\) Identifying and ranking risk and Protective factors: A brief guide.](#)

Measuring output and outcome indicators

As a reminder, **output indicators** measure the direct, immediate-term results of an activity, or in other words, what the intervention has achieved in the short-term. **Outcome indicators** represent the achievement or failure of the outcome. It relates to the change that results from an intervention in the short-, medium- or long-term.

Some organisations may have dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation teams to collect the data, while others may mobilize programme staff to collect information. Either way, your data collectors should be trained on how to collect data, and attend a specific training session on how to collect data from children if relevant.

Review of the logframe with selected output and outcome indicators and the means of verification with your team at the beginning of the project to ensure timely and harmonised data collection.

Data collection tools

The measurement of output or outcome indicators may require the development or the selection of data collection tools. You may need to design some tools specifically to reflect the outputs or outcomes of your activities. This may include pre-post training test, post-intervention surveys, individual questionnaires or attendance sheet that should be age and gender-sensitive.

The measurement of some outcome indicators may be based on contextualized criteria ([see 3.2 Monitoring on p.106](#)). For instance, the measurement of reintegration indicators such as *% of boys and girls who are CAAFAG and who report successful reintegration after X months of reintegration support* require the identification of criteria, identified by former CAAFAG and the community. You can collect information about these criteria through post-intervention surveys for instance.

The measurement of knowledge gained following a training or an awareness-raising activity, should be conducted before and after the activity, using a questionnaire, a quiz or a game. If participants are literate, you can use a questionnaire they fill before and after the training, for instance to measure the increase in knowledge. A quiz can be a fun approach to collect information anonymously, which is often less intimidating for participants. If participants have a smartphone or a computer, you can use a quiz with [Mentimeter](#) or [Kahoot](#) to assess their knowledge. If it is not possible, you can organize a game such as a Jeopardy game with questions related to the topic using an [interactive PowerPoint](#) or simply double sided cards with questions for each amount. In this case, you will assess the knowledge of small groups and not individuals. Whatever approach you select, it is important to ensure that the improvements in participants' performance (or knowledge) can be measured.

Tools

- Example of survey to measure the release and reintegration indicator

Complementary reading:

- [The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action \(2019\) Child Protection in Emergencies Situation and Response Monitoring toolkit](#)

Development of a performance measurement framework

The following table is an illustrative example of a logframe, including examples of prevention, release and reintegration intervention objectives and indicators, including both output and outcome indicators.

Adapt the following logframe according to the interventions selected in programme design and the objectives developed for each. Complete the target based on the locations and the number of beneficiaries targeted for each. Identify different means of verification based on the context or specific donor reporting requirements.

Complementary reading

- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021) A Brief Guide to Selecting Child Protection Minimum Standards Indicators for Application in Programs, Projects, or Humanitarian Response Plans
- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 9 - Programme Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
- [RISE \(2019\) Monitoring and Evaluation of reintegration Toolkit](#)

PERFORMANCE AND MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Activities	Indicators	Target	Means of verification	Frequency	Responsibility
Prevention objective: Girls and boys affected by conflict are protected from recruitment and use					
Outcome: Risk factors of recruitment and use are addressed and protective factors are strengthened					
Youth-led prevention activities	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls who demonstrate knowledge of risks factors related to recruitment and use by armed forces/groups and behaviours to protect themselves		Post training/awareness raising sessions questionnaire		
	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls who demonstrate knowledge of reporting mechanisms related to grave violations and how to access them		Post training/awareness raising sessions questionnaire		
Youth-led peacebuilding programme	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls who demonstrate knowledge of non-violent conflict resolution strategies		Post training/awareness raising sessions questionnaire		
Community level prevention programme	Outcome indicator: # of community members who demonstrate knowledge of harmful outcomes related to recruitment and use by armed forces/ groups		Post training/awareness raising sessions questionnaire		
Set up primary and secondary education opportunities in under-served areas	Outcome indicator: # of out of school boys and girls who have access to formal and informal education since the start of project activities		New education opportunities - enrolment and attendance record		
Release objective: Boys and girls from CAAFAG are released from AFAG					
Outcome: Girls and boys are safely released through formal and informal processes					
Setup of community-level release mechanism	Outcome indicator: # of and % of boys and girls released through community-level release mechanism		Case management Information Management records (Primero) and/or Community records		
Formal and informal release programme	Output indicator: # of boys and girls separated from armed forces and armed groups through formal and informal processes		MRM records		
	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls who remain disengaged from AFAG 12 month after completing a reintegration programme ²⁸²		Case management Information Management records (Primero) and survey with former CAAFAG Beyond disengagement, consider deidentification as well (see Programme design – Release) The criteria of deidentification should be developed based on the results of the discussion with former CAAFAG Consultation workshop 4.3 Brainstorming on the release process or KII Q5,6,7)		

281 Stark et al (2009)

282 Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 11 CAAFAG

PERFORMANCE AND MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Activities	Indicators	Target	Means of verification	Frequency	Responsibility
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Reintegration objectives: Former boys and girls from CAAFAG and vulnerable children are reintegrated into their community

Outcome: Girls and boys are reunited with their families and their needs are addressed

Set up of case management service	Output indicator: # of former CAAFAG benefiting from case management		Case management Information Management records (Primerio)		
	Output indicator: # of vulnerable boys and girls accessing case management		Case management Information Management records (Primerio)		
	Outcome indicator: % of CP workers trained and supervised who demonstrate knowledge and competence in applying the CM process ²⁸³		Post training questionnaire		
	Outcome indicator: % of children and caregivers who report satisfaction with direct services received and the response actions taken through the case management process		Satisfaction survey with children and their caregivers		
Alternative care	Output indicator: % of boys and girls in alternative care who are placed in a family or caregiving environment within 30 days of registration ²⁸⁵		Case management Information Management records (Primerio)		
	Output indicator: % of identified foster caregivers or mentors trained and provided with supervision support		Training attendance – monitoring visits report		
Family tracing and reunification programme	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls separated from AFAG who were reintegrated into a family environment ²⁸⁷		Case management Information Management records (Primerio)		
Reintegration support services	Outcome indicator: # of vulnerable boys and girls, including former CAAFAG who report an improvement in their situation due to their participation in the MHPSS/ Health/ Livelihood/ Education/ etc intervention		Post intervention survey with children and their caregivers		
Community-led reintegration support	Output indicator: # of community-led reintegration initiatives that received support				
Training of health/education etc. workers in safe identification and referral of CAAFAG	Outcome indicator: # of safe and gender-sensitive referrals of boys and girls to child protection services made by health/education workers		Case management information management (Primerio)		

Outcome: Girls and boys have improved health and psychosocial wellbeing

MHPSS counselling sessions for vulnerable children	Outcome indicator: % of children and their caregivers who report improvement in their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing following programme completion ²⁸⁸		<p>Select the right scale based on the objective of the MHPSS programme</p> <p>Use this guide from the Alliance for CPHA to select the relevant measurement tool: Defining and measuring Child wellbeing in Humanitarian action: a contextualization guide</p>		
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PERFORMANCE AND MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Activities	Indicators	Target	Means of verification	Frequency	Responsibility
Outcome: Older girls and boys are financially self-sufficient					
Entrepreneurship programme for vulnerable children	Output indicator: % of boys and girls engaged in entrepreneurship programmes who report earning an income 3 months after the setup of their business		Entrepreneurship programme monitoring visits – check of book records		
Outcome: Girls and boys have their education needs met					
Education activities for former CAAFAG	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls engaged in education activities who have attended at least 70% of classes		Education activity attendance list Daily attendance tracking		
Life skills activities for vulnerable children	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls engaged in life skills activities who report feeling confident about their skills to assert their rights and express their decisions		Post activity questionnaire		
Outcome: Girls' and boys' rights are protected when they are in contact with the law					
Access to justice programme for former CAAFAG	Outcome indicator: % of children in contact with the justice system who report child-friendly access to legal support ²⁸⁹		Survey with former CAAFAG This indicator requires a definition of contact with the justice system and child-friendly access to legal support See Example of survey provided in the tools		
Outcome: Girls and boys are socially integrated in their family and community					
Reintegration package for former CAAFAG	Outcome indicator: % of boys and girls CAAFAG who report successful reintegration after 12 (adapt as needed) months of reintegration support		Survey with former CAAFAG This indicator requires a list of criteria that determines what successful reintegration means. The criteria should be defined through a participatory process involving CAAFAG (See Context analysis – Consultation of former CAAFAG workshop – 5.3 Diamond ranking of attributes of doing well and the KII Q8 See Example of survey provided in the tools		
	Outcome indicator: % of CAAFAG and at-risk children who report greater community acceptance				

281 Stark et al (2009)

282 Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 11 CAAFAG

283 Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 18 Case Management

284 Ibid

285 Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 19 Alternative Care

286 Ibid

287 Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 11 CAAFAG

288 Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 10 Mental Health and Psychosocial Distress

289 Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 20 Justice for children

C. Human resources

Programmes targeting CAAFAG tend to be more complex, require high level of expertise and often last longer than other Child Protection programmes. The sensitivity and the risks of doing harm are high, even if the CAAFAG case load is integrated into existing Child Protection programmes. As a result, you should carefully consider staffing, including supervision, to set up the right foundations of the programme.

Scale and staffing

To determine the scale and staffing needs to implement a CAAFAG programme, including integrated into existing Child Protection programmes, you need to determine:

- How many children are they planning to reach?
- What is the project duration?
- How many locations/sites are they considering?
- What programmes are they planning to implement? Prevention, release, and/or reintegration.
- What activities are they planning to implement? Community prevention; training of armed actors to facilitate release; case management, education, economic recovery, etc.

The table below outlines suggested positions and staffing ratios based on examples of interventions. Each organization may have a different position titles, a different organization, and some contexts may require additional or reduced staffing based on factors such as cultural considerations, security, spread of field sites, etc.

Adapt the following table according to these considerations as well as the number of locations, the programme and the interventions selected and the number of children targeted for each. Some positions can also be merged if the intervention is implemented in the same area. For instance, community mobilizers can be the same people for prevention, release and reintegration programmes. In this case, reduce the number of locations for each community mobilizer to 3 instead of 5.

Note: a site refers to the smallest administrative unit such as a village, a neighbourhood or a population grouping in a camp or a settlement.

In locations where it is culturally appropriate, prioritize both male and female facilitators when two facilitators are required.

Activities	Position	Ratio
MANAGEMENT STAFFING		
Management team	Child protection /CAAFAG project manager	1:1 programme
	M&E officer/manager	1:1 programme
	Administrative assistant	1:1 programme
PREVENTION PROGRAMMES		
Youth engagement/ peacebuilding programme	Youth engagement/peace building officer	1:5 locations/sites
	Youth engagement/peace building facilitators	2:3 groups of young people – 20 young people per group
Parenting skills	Parenting skills officer	1:5 locations/sites
	Parenting skills facilitators	2:4 groups of parents – 20 parents per group
Community level protection mechanism	Community mobilizers	1:5 locations/sites
RELEASE PROGRAMMES		
Community mobilization programme	Community mobilizers	1:5 locations/sites
Advocacy and training of government and AFAG	Release programme officer	1-2:1 programme
REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME		
HEALTH		
Coordinate access to medical care	Health officer	1:1 programme
MHPSS programme	MHPSS officer	1:5 locations/sites
	MHPSS counsellors/ facilitators	2:4 groups – 15 participants per group
	MHPSS supervisors for (external) supervision	1:1 programme
EDUCATION		
Formal education	Education officers	1:5 locations/sites
Nonformal education	Nonformal education / life skills facilitators	2:6 groups of young people – 30 young people per group
SAFETY & CARE		
Case management	Case management officer/ supervisor	1:5 caseworkers
	Caseworkers	1:20 cases
	Database officer	1:1 programme
	Database assistant	1:1 location/site
Family Tracing and Reunification programme	Tracing officer	1:1 region

Activities	Position	Ratio
Alternative care – foster family/ independent living	Alternative care officer	1:20 foster families - independant living
Interim Care Centre	Interim Care center manager	1:1 Interim Care centre
	Caseworkers	1:20 children
	Activity facilitators	4:20 children
	Cooks/cleaners	3:1 Interim Care centre
	Security guards	3:1 Interim Care centre
JUSTICE		
Legal assistance	Lawyers/para lawyers	1:20 cases
Legal advocacy/training of justice actors	Advocacy legal officer	1:1 programme
ECONOMIC RECOVERY		
Entrepreneurship programme	Economic recovery manager	1:1 programme
Vocational training, business skills training, monitoring of business and job opportunities	Economic recovery officers	1:20 children
SOCIAL BELONGING		
Parenting skills programme	Parenting skills officer	1:5 locations/sites
	Parenting skills facilitators	2:4 groups of parents – 20 parents per group
Community engagement	Community mobilizers	1:5 locations/sites

Competency and skills framework

The following table highlights the competencies expected for each position involved in CAAFAG programmes. This information will be useful to allocate the right budget for each position, based on the competencies required.

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 8 - Human Resources and Capacity
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – Competency Framework](#)
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – Inter agency guidelines for case management and child protection Appendix 1: case worker competency and skills framework](#)
- [Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies – Education in Emergencies Competency Framework](#)

Technical Competencies²⁹⁰

Technical competencies are a measurable set of knowledge, skills or attributes required to effectively perform a task. Each competency includes expected behaviours and responsibilities that increase over time with experience and career progression. As such, the following table distinguishes 3 levels of experience. Level 1 relates to individuals who are new to the relevant competency domain. Level 2 is relevant to individuals with some experience from a few assignments across different contexts in the relevant competency domain. Level 3 corresponds to individuals who are experts in the relevant competency domain and who can train others.

²⁹⁰ Adapted from The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action 2020 – Competency Framework

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
MANAGEMENT STAFFING				
Child protection /CAAFAG project manager	Managing programme cycle	Contributes to inter-agency efforts to review, update or conduct mapping exercises and studies on CAAFAG	Involves children, families, communities and duty bearers in mapping exercises and studies when possible	Supports inter-agency efforts to review secondary data to identify immediate risks, their root causes and gaps in existing information
		Designs quality CAAFAG programmes that are gender-sensitive based on context analysis and with the participation of children	Prioritises life-saving actions in the early response phase, while maintaining links to sustainable, community-level approaches	Plans and implements actions that create complementarity between community-, national- and international-level organisations so that the humanitarian response strengthens, and does not undermine, existing structures and systems
		Monitors programme quality, outputs, outcomes and, where possible, impact	Monitors changes in the conflict and adjusts programme implementation accordingly	Prevents, identifies and mitigates unintended negative consequences of CAAFAG programme interventions throughout implementation
		Shares findings and learning from assessments, monitoring, feedback and accountability mechanisms with all stakeholders, including children and families	Engages in joint learning initiatives, evaluations of CAAFAG programmes with other relevant sectors	Uses learning to adjust programmes and inform the design of future interventions
	Engaging with the UN missions	Identifies the role of UN peacekeeping operations and political missions in protecting children	Supports coordination with the UN missions to observe CP principles and standards, facilitate collaboration, and manage resources appropriately	Establishes and distributes clear standards, guidance, rationale, responsibilities and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for CP actors on engaging with UN missions
		Facilitates the role of UN DPKO in implementing and mainstreaming resolutions and DPKO policies on children affected by armed conflict	Helps UN missions to strengthen government policies, laws and processes on communication, systems and child-related institutions	Engages and collaborates with relevant leaders of UN missions to identify and respond to the recruitment of children
		Exhibits knowledge of the UN missions' mandates and roles on emergency response, recovery, stability, and peace-building activities	Identifies key areas for the coordination and collaboration with the UN missions	Engages the UN CT or CP coordination mechanisms/groups to influence UN strategies that relate to CAAFAG

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
Child protection /CAAFAG project manager	Coordinating a quality CAAFAG programme	Engages in coordination with actors in the Child Protection in Humanitarian Action coordination mechanism or other working group	Assumes a specific supportive role within Child Protection in Humanitarian Action coordination mechanism	Leads the coordination of CPHA efforts for harmonised, timely, tailored, effective preparedness and response actions for CAAFAG
		Supports humanitarian organisations and relevant institutions to participate in CPHA coordination mechanisms and technical or sectoral working groups, with the involvement of the government where appropriate	Identifies key CPHA actors and supports their effective participation in the CPHA coordination mechanism and response to CAAFAG	Builds and maintains a strategic membership of community-based, local/ national governments and organisations as well as INGOs, UN agencies and donors for effective and well-coordinated CAAFAG prevention and response strategies
		Recognises unique roles, mandates, and ways of working with the members of the CPHA coordination groups and relevant actors	Engages with all CPHA-related actors according to their unique roles, mandates and ways of working	Fosters diversity and inclusion at all levels of CPHA response and coordination, including tools and guidance documents
		Adjusts communication style to match the audience, particularly cross-culturally	Communicates effectively with different actors and stakeholders, particularly cross-culturally	Demonstrates political and cultural insight in communicating with humanitarian actors and relevant stakeholders
		Demonstrates awareness of problem-solving techniques and consensus building in inter-agency environment	Applies problem-solving strategies to manage differences of opinion and approaches within the coordination sphere	Uses objective reasoning and consensus building to approach potential disagreements and conflict of interests
M&E officer/ manager	Monitoring child protection	Engages in inter-agency CPHA coordination mechanisms to establish indicators, monitoring processes, roles and responsibilities	Establishes effective, timely and appropriate information sharing, referral processes, reporting schedules and templates for CPHA monitoring that avoid duplication and minimise reporting burdens	Establishes and implements an analysis plan for the CPHA monitoring system
		Disaggregates all data about children by sex/ gender, age and disability at a minimum	Prioritises the best interests of the child and the informed consent/ assent of children and/or caregivers when collecting information	Provides staff who monitor CP concerns with psychosocial support to mitigate the effects of secondary trauma
		Puts in place protocols for staff who are monitoring CAAFAG concerns to identify and refer children and families who are at risk of or who have survived abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence	Ensures that CPHA data is collected, used, stored and shared in line with confidentiality, 'do no harm', and the best interests of children, families and communities	Ensures identified protection risks, vulnerabilities and relevant trends are regularly shared with humanitarian actors and feed into the development of strategies, programmes and advocacy actions

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
M&E officer/ manager	Managing information	Demonstrates knowledge on confidentiality procedures, ethical data collection protocols and 'do no harm' principle	Implements data protection policies, user-friendly digital systems and terms for use	Ensures regular and correct collection of data by CPHA partners, including reporting back to affected population involved in the data collection process
		Knows methods that avoid 'double counting' when compiling data	Compares and triangulates information with relevant stakeholders and previously reported data before using it	Consolidates, analyses and shares population-level information, and gives feedback to those who have provided information
		Participates in assessment analysis to identify CAAFAG concerns, gaps and potential solutions	Works with CPHA partners and stakeholders to identify the most recent, context-specific CAAFAG data and to establish a baseline for agreed-upon CAAFAG priorities	Uses up-to-date information to guide decision-making, response planning, conflict and gap analyses, and CPHA strategies
		Feeds information into CAAFAG inter-agency data collection system in line with set procedures and policies	Works with partners, stakeholders and affected populations to align inter-agency IM tools and procedures with national laws, policies and systems	Establishes harmonised IM tools and databases (online and offline)
PREVENTION²⁹¹				
Youth engagement/ peace building officer	Integrate CP and Peacebuilding	Identifies tools, standards and potential for integrated peacebuilding-CP programming and assessment	Conducts and promotes joint CP-peacebuilding training, assessment, planning, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions	Ensures that CP and CAAFAG concerns are included in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding programmes
		Facilitates joint, coordinated and/ or complementary CAAFAG and Peacebuilding programming in child-focused settings	Initiates collaborations on MRM, CAAFAG, and reintegration with CP and Peacebuilding actors, and other stakeholders	Ensures that children can access safe, high-quality, child-friendly, gender-sensitive, flexible, protective and relevant peacebuilding opportunities and environments
Youth engagement/ peace building facilitators	Developing strategies to strengthen peacebuilding	Engages children in identifying and exploring their skills, needs and risks and facilitates participatory peacebuilding activities appropriately	Identifies and promotes peacebuilding activities that contribute to the sustainability peacebuilding outcomes	Ensures that group activities provide a sense of normalcy, are carried out in a gender sensitive fashion, and are based on relevant inter-agency guidelines
Parenting skills officer	Preventing and responding to physical and emotional maltreatment risks	Maps effective child-friendly providers of response services and identifies gaps	Increases multidisciplinary teams' capacity to use sex- and age-appropriate strategies to prevent and respond to emotional and physical violence	Develops strategies to help response services manage emotional and physical violence cases in a gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory and non-stigmatizing fashion

²⁹¹ Note that some of the positions under the prevention section were merged with positions under the reintegration section, namely parenting skills officers/facilitators and community mobilizers.

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
Parenting skills facilitators	Developing strategies to strengthen family and caregiving environments	Collaborates with children and adults to identify local views and responses to different forms of violence and non-violent alternatives and solutions	Maps and analyses the most common forms of emotional and physical violence, to inform parenting skills programming, decision making and responses	Supports the organisation to protect children from emotional and physical violence to facilitate access to proper services and case management systems
		Involves children, families, community members in parenting skills sessions about emotional and physical violence and prevention and support services	Train parents, key members of communities and teachers in locally identified strategies to prevent common forms of violence	Ensures the provision of age- and gender-sensitive multisectoral care for children and families who have been subjected to emotional and physical violence
Community mobilizers	Developing community-level approaches	Maps, assesses and builds upon existing formal and informal community-level CP mechanisms and service providers	Supports local volunteers and community members to assess existing support systems and resources, develop and implement prevention and response plans, and supports child survivors	Ensures that children are protected from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect by community-level CP mechanisms
		Engages communities throughout project cycle management to ensure interventions are contextualised and community-owned	Collaborates with key CPHA, cross-sectoral and national actors and stakeholders to strengthen existing community-level CAAFAG protection initiatives	Ensures that community-level CP mechanisms are collaborative, community-driven, sustainable and built on existing local and national structures and capacities
		Involves relevant agencies and community-level CP mechanisms in case management wherever appropriate	Supports and expands formal and informal community support and referral systems using culturally sensitive approaches and principles	Supports the organisation and partners to include key elements of community-driven interventions in community-level CP programming
		Identifies and assesses how culture, politics, socio-economics, traditions, norms and customs impact community functioning and what implications they have in the protective environment of CAAFAG	Mobilises and strengthens appropriate peer-to-peer youth engagement in community-level CP mechanisms	Supports community-level CP mechanisms in developing strategies that promote gender sensitivity and inclusion
RELEASE				
Release programme officer	Developing strategies to facilitate the release of children	Document existing release strategies, exit trajectories, key stakeholders and identifies gaps	Increases multidisciplinary teams capacity to use sex- and age-appropriate strategies to facilitate the release of children	Develops strategies to support safe formal and informal release of children, in a non-stigmatizing and gender sensitive fashion

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME				
Health officer	Integrating CP and health	Identifies the relevant guidelines, principles and standards that inform joint CP-health collaboration, programming and assessment	Conducts and promotes joint CPHA-health training, assessment, planning, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions	Ensures CP concerns are included in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of health programmes
		Shares the results of CAAFAG assessments and their implications for health with communities and health actors	Establishes referral and monitoring systems so that health facility staff can efficiently monitor CAAFAG risks in hospitals and refer children with protection needs	Ensures that all CAAFAG have access to safe, protective health services that are appropriate to their age and developmental needs
		Collaborates with health workers to generate common understandings of formal and informal health services	Ensures CP projects include safe, dignified and confidential systems to identify and refer cases of illness and injury to appropriate health services	Supports coordination, collaboration and rapid referrals between and among social welfare, injury surveillance and health systems
MHPSS officer	Preventing and responding to psychosocial distress and promoting mental health	Identifies and maps existing local, national and international services and capacities for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)	Participates in MHPSS and protection coordination forums to promote coordination among actors	Coordinates MHPSS actors in various sectors to identify service gaps and overlap and align responses with humanitarian and SGBV guidance
		Supports a coordinated, efficient MHPSS emergency response by strengthening inter-sectoral and MHPSS coordination groups	Builds capacity of CPHA workers and cross-sectoral partners in MHPSS skills, standards and guidance for proper MHPSS prevention and response	Designs socio-ecological programmes to strengthen all stakeholders' resilience, coping mechanisms and delivery of MHPSS services
		Uses MHPSS, social and legal protection systems to identify, prevent, monitor and respond to risks and threats to mental and psychosocial health	Develops, adapts, or strengthens culturally aware MHPSS inter-agency strategies, indicators, assessments and tools for monitoring and evaluation and results sharing	Builds and leverages local capacity for analyses, participatory community response plans, and culture, spirituality and religion in MHPSS activities
		Conducts regular assessments of the accessibility and quality of mental health care	Collaborates with local, indigenous and traditional health systems to merge psychological and social considerations into general health care	Trains CPHA, cross-sectoral staff, volunteers and service providers on basic, focused, non-specialised and specialised MHPSS services
MHPSS counsellors/ facilitators		Implements strategies to reduce discrimination and stigma of CAAFAG with severe psychosocial distress and/or mental disability	Strengthens access to safe and supportive education where children and caregivers can receive MHPSS information, support, or referrals	Trains CPHA, cross-sectoral staff, volunteers and service providers on basic, focused, non-specialised and specialised MHPSS services

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
Education officers	Integrating CP and education	Identifies tools, standards and potential for integrated education-CP programming and assessment	Conducts and promotes joint CP-education training, assessment, planning, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions	Ensures that CP and CAAFAG concerns are included in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of education programmes
		Facilitates joint, coordinated and/ or complementary CP and EiE programming in child-focused settings	Initiates collaborations on MRM, CAAFAG, and reintegration with CP and Education clusters, the Ministry of Education, Social Affairs and other stakeholders	Ensures that CAAFAG can access safe, high-quality, gender-sensitive child-friendly, flexible, protective and relevant learning opportunities and environments
Nonformal education/life skills facilitators	Developing strategies to strengthen education outcomes	Engages children in identifying and exploring their skills, needs and risks, provides non-formal education activities appropriately	Identify and promote nonformal education activities that contribute to the sustainability education outcomes	Ensures that group activities provide a sense of normalcy and are carried out in a gender-sensitive fashion and are based on relevant inter-agency guidelines
Case management officer	Developing strategies for case management	Maps service providers and develops robust referral pathways for children and their caregivers to gain access to support	Maps gaps in service provision across CPHA actors and cross-sectoral partners	Ensures timely revision and dissemination of service directories and referral pathways to all CPHA actors, advocates for missing services, and conducts training on mapping and referrals
		Identifies the causes, vulnerabilities and impacts of family separation (non-emergency separation, mixed migration etc)	Mitigates the risk of separation through community- and national-level prevention and preparedness activities (i.e. birth registration, evacuation processes)	Ensures prevention and response to family separation and the protection and care for CAAFAG according to their specific needs and best interests
		Identifies the inter-agency guidance and legal frameworks related to UASC (human rights, humanitarian and criminal law, CPMS, etc)	Collaborates with government and CP organisations to coordinate, contextualise and harmonise all CAAFAG UASC response systems and activities	Advocates for CAAFAG UASC programming to include resource management, tracing, case management, documentation and training
		Uses CAAFAG case management and information systems with confidentiality, informed consent and this in the best interests of the child	Maps local and national capacity and gaps to assess separation risks and vulnerabilities, to identify potential partners, and to organise assessments	Anticipates secondary risks associated with family tracing and reunification interventions

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
Caseworker supervisor	Developing strategies for case management	Schedules and supervises case management meetings at least every two weeks. Conducts weekly supervision meetings with all case workers, providing technical support.	Conducts regular case file audits and checks that protocols and principles are respected Ensures staff gaps and training needs are identified and addressed. Develops individual staff capacity building plans.	Reviews and analyses trends in the caseload to inform programming
		Builds trust with their team and external actors.	Encourages reflective practice	Identifies and builds upon caseworkers strengths
Caseworkers		Recognises protection concerns for CAAFAG, can identify risk and protective factors, understands the case management process, and has basic knowledge of international and national legal frameworks that promote the protection and care of children	Uses core communication techniques for supporting children to increase child resilience and wellbeing, has knowledge to coordinate case management systematically, adheres to confidentiality protocols, and makes decisions in the best interest of the child	Provides CP case management training to government, civil society agencies, community-based networks and academic/training institutions to enhance the knowledge and skills of the case management workforce
		Implements safe, ethical, empathetic and inclusive case management services according to inter-agency guideline	Scales up safe, ethical, empathetic and inclusive case management services according to inter-agency guidelines to ensure more children have access to critical protective services	Sustains safe, ethical, empathetic and inclusive case management services according to inter-agency guidelines by advocating for investment in case management systems at national level
		Incorporates the perspectives of the child and key individuals in the child's life as a part of the case management process, including assessments, 'best interests' decisions, and case planning	Ensures a child-centred, age-appropriate case management response is provided that gives children the space to freely express their views and fully participate in the process	Is able to make decisions in the best interests of a child throughout the case management process that meaningfully involve the child and key individuals in the child's life to ensure their safety, wellbeing and healthy development
		Uses case management information systems with confidentiality, informed consent and in the best interests of the child	Analyses data and identifies trends for donor reporting and to inform case management response	Ensures identified protection risks, vulnerabilities and relevant trends are regularly shared with humanitarian actors and feed into the development of strategies, programmes and advocacy actions
Database officer				

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
Tracing officer	Preventing and responding to risks of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)	Works with CPHA UASC partners and stakeholders to follow standardised data protection protocols and procedures	Uses consistent criteria to identify CAAFAG UASC, trace families, contextualise inter-agency UASC guidance, and care for children awaiting reunification	Uses best practices when identifying, assessing, selecting and monitoring long-term, permanent and alternative care for CAAFAG UASC
		Identifies and leverages nonformal, traditional, formal and organisation-led family tracing methods, good practices and mechanisms	Implements an appropriate and tailored family tracing, verification, reunification and reintegration CAAFAG programme for the child's best interest	Supports inter-agency and country SOPs that share information, refer to services, clarify roles and responsibilities, and advance CAAFAG reunification
Alternative care officer	Developing strategies for alternative care	Maps existing formal and nonformal alternative care arrangements in the best interests of the child	Adapts and contextualises inclusive, non-discriminatory and appropriate alternative care arrangements to the needs of the population and the nature of the emergency	Strengthens existing alternative care systems focusing on family- and community-based care and engaging in flexible contingency planning
		Identifies and raises awareness of relevant local, national and international laws, policies, treaties and guidelines	Supports and builds capacity of local actors to plan, oversee, manage and implement alternative care according to inter-agency guidelines and minimum standards	Ensures a socio-ecological approach to assessments and the identification of interim and long-term care options aligning with the child's best interest, national legislation and policies
		Promotes family unity and ensures that families at risk receive adequate access to basic services and social protection to prevent separation	Applies an analytical approach to evaluating alternative care options based on the principles of necessity and suitability, communities' caring traditions and the national legal framework	Plans, designs and implements follow-up visits, monitoring, feedback and reporting mechanisms by all stakeholders involved to monitor children's protection and wellbeing
		Ensures safe, gender-sensitive and appropriate residential care for CAAFAG	Adapts and contextualises inclusive, non-discriminatory and appropriate residential care to the needs of CAAFAG	Ensures that ICC provide a sense of normalcy, promotes resilience, and is based on relevant inter-agency guidelines
Activity facilitators		Engages children in identifying and exploring their skills, needs and risks to provide group activities appropriately	Promotes group and individual activities that create a predictable and stimulating environment for CAAFAG to be safe, to learn, to express themselves, to make connections and to feel supported	Ensures that group and individual activities provide a sense of normalcy and are carried out in a gender-sensitive fashion and are based on relevant inter-agency guidelines

CAAFAG programme related positions	Competency	Indicator Level 1	Indicator Level 2	Indicator Level 3
Activity facilitators	Developing strategies for alternative care	Identifies, supports and strengthens existing spaces, services and activities before developing additional group and individual activities	Designs group and individual activities based on needs and protection risk assessment and advocates for inclusive, ethical and accessible group activities that build children's resilience	Supports an inter-agency definition among CP stakeholders of what constitutes culturally, gender- and age-sensitive group activities
Advocacy legal officer	Developing strategies to promote and uphold justice for children	Builds capacity of service providers on the rights and best interest of children in contact with the law and justice actors on age-appropriate ways of communicating with children	Supports juvenile justice approaches which allow children to be accountable to society without being formally processed as a criminal	Supports states to use restorative justice approaches, end the detention of CAAFAG and to opt for detention only as a last resort, and the shortest period possible in appropriate facilities
Lawyers/para lawyers		Identifies justice for children policies, laws and strategies to protect CAAFAG through formal and customary laws and interventions overcoming potential risks of justice systems	Strengthens the implementation and awareness of existing CP laws and facilitates the alignment of and links between customary and national legal systems and international laws	Advocates for and supports the development of new laws that criminalise recruitment, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children
		Identifies the legal framework, risks, vulnerabilities, causes and impact that affect children in contact with the law	Supports child-friendly legal and military actors and processes, police stations, detention facilities, rehabilitation centres, diversion systems, etc.	Ensures that children who come into contact with the justice system are treated in line with international standards
		Communicates with CAAFAG in age-appropriate ways at all stages of any judicial process	Strengthens collaboration between the justice and social welfare systems by mapping services and establishing joint referral systems	Advocates for the appropriate handling of CAAFAG cases during institutional processes and media coverage
Economic recovery manager	Integrating CP and livelihoods	Identifies the relevant guidelines, principles and standards that inform CP-Livelihood collaboration, programming and assessment	Conducts and promotes joint CPHA-Livelihoods training, response, assessment, planning, prevention, preparedness and recovery activities	Ensures that CP concerns are included in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of livelihood programmes
		Shares the results on CP assessments and their implications for livelihood with communities and relevant actors	Establishes referral and monitoring systems so livelihood staff can efficiently monitor CP risks and refer children with protection needs	Ensures that the safety and dignity of an affected population is included as a sub-objective of livelihood interventions
Economic recovery officers		Engages children in identifying and exploring their skills, needs and risks to provide livelihood activities appropriately	Identify and promote group and individual livelihood activities that contribute to the sustainability of economic recovery outcomes	Ensures that group activities provide a sense of normalcy and are carried out in a gender sensitive fashion and are based on relevant inter-agency guidelines

D. Budget

Funding to prevent recruitment and use of boys and girls will need to sit clearly across the humanitarian and development nexus.²⁹²

Based on the interventions selected, staffing needs, and activity and work planning, outline the budget. The funding required to run a CAAFAG programme will vary significantly from one country to another depending on the security situation, the availability of human and material resources locally and the remoteness, spread and access to field sites.

Key questions to consider

- How will the community expectations and local standards influence budgeting?
- How will the security, remoteness and spread of field sites influence movements, recruitment of staff, monitoring, procurement and delivery of materials?
- How many children, families, community members, armed and government actors do they expect to reach?
- What is the planned programme duration?

The table below provides an example of budget with budget lines to consider. Adapt the budget to the context, the activities selected and include the costs.

Expense line item	Quantity	Unit cost	Total
Management team			
Child protection/CAAFAG project manager			
M&E officer/manager			
M&E assistant			
Administrative assistant			
Equipment			
Computers			
Printer			
Mobile phones			
Communication			
Mobile data/airtime			
PREVENTION			
Staffing			
Youth engagement/ peace building officer			
Youth engagement/ peace building facilitators			
Parenting skills officer			
Parenting skills facilitators			
Community mobilizers			

292 Paris Principles Steering Group (2022)

Expense line item	Quantity	Unit cost	Total
Programme			
Staff training			
Community awareness and mobilization			
Youth gathering and activities			
Parenting skills supplies			
Project supplies			
Vehicle rental and fuel			
RELEASE			
Staffing			
Release programme officer			
Community mobilizers			
Programme			
Staff training			
Training of government and armed groups/forces			
Establishment of a release SOP			
Transfer of children released to interim care			
Project supplies			
Vehicle rental and fuel			
REINTEGRATION			
Staffing			
Health and MHPSS			
Health officer			
MHPSS officer			
MHPSS counsellors/ facilitators			
MHPSS counsellors/ facilitators (external) supervision			
Education			
Education officers			
Nonformal education / life skills facilitators			
Safety and care			
Case management officer/ supervisor			
Caseworkers			
Database officer			
Database assistant			
Tracing officer			
Alternative care officer			
Interim care centre manager			
Caseworkers			
Activity facilitators			
Cooks/cleaners			
Security guards			

Expense line item	Quantity	Unit cost	Total
Access to justice			
Lawyers/para lawyers			
Advocacy legal officer			
Economic recovery			
Economic recovery manager			
Economic recovery officers			
Social belonging			
Parenting skills officer			
Parenting skills facilitators			
Community mobilizers			
Programme			
Health and MHPSS			
Medical care			
MHPSS staff training			
MHPSS counselling session supplies and venue rental			
Education			
Support to schools through equipment, school refurbishment, school supplies, teaching materials, etc.			
Individual support to vulnerable children, including cash transfer for school fees, scholarships			
Training of teachers, school principals, school management committees, Parents and Teachers associations			
Nonformal education sessions			
Safety and care			
Case management supplies and equipment			
Staff training			
Alternative care kit			
Foster families training			
Foster families support			
Interim care centre (ICC) supplies			
ICC rental and utilities			
Access to justice			
Access to justice supplies			
Legal fees			
Staff training			
Training of justice actors			
Advocacy for the implementation of the CRC			
Economic recovery			
Economic recovery supplies			
Staff training			
Market assessment			

Expense line item	Quantity	Unit cost	Total
Individual Livelihood support			
Financial literacy and business skills			
Vocational/entrepreneurship/employability training			
Job placement			
Life skills sessions			
Businessmen/women mentorship			
Entrepreneurship/savings clubs			
Cash for work/cash vouchers			
Social belonging			
Staff training			
Parenting skills supplies			
Community mobilization activities			
Community projects			
TOTAL			

Complementary reading:

- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 7 - Funding

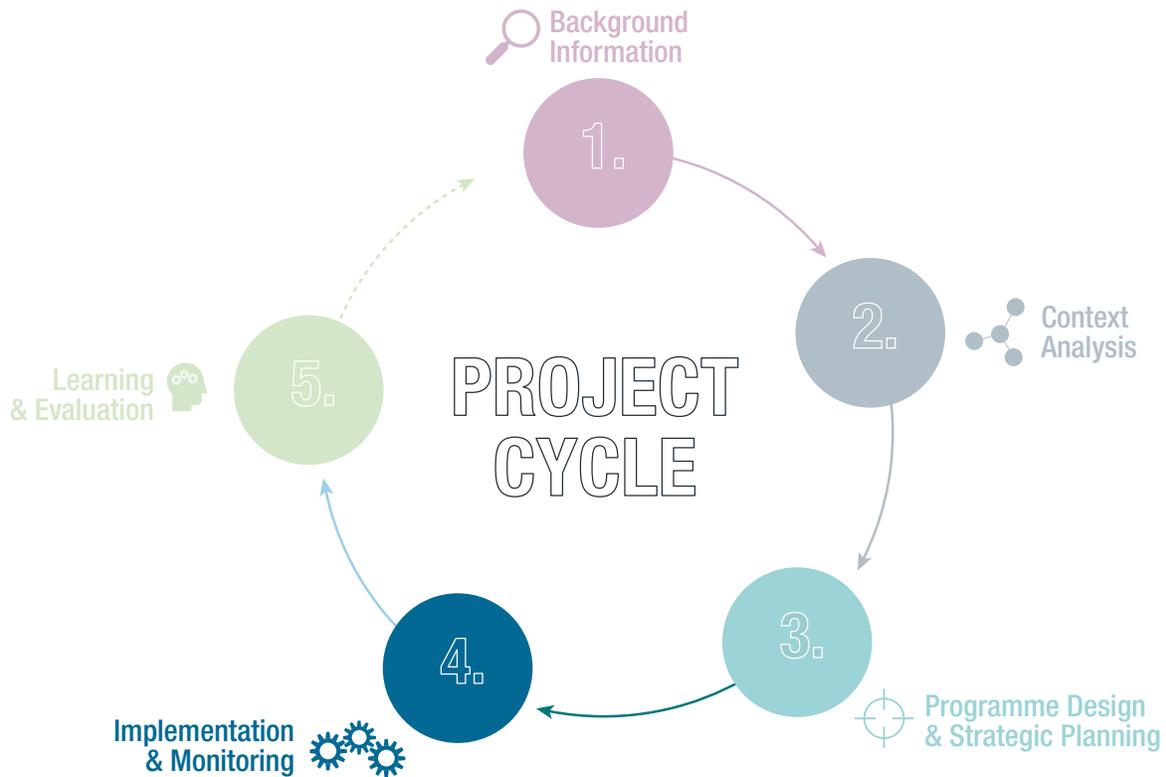


4. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING



CAAFAG

Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines



1.

- A. Introduction to CAAFAG
- B. Legal and Normative Framework

2.

- A. Research Questions and Scope
 - B. Methodology Selection
 - C. Timeline
 - D. Human Resources
 - E. Budget
- A. Data Collection Plan
 - B. Workplan
 - C. Contextualizing the Tools
 - D. Setting up a Referral Pathway
 - E. Training of Data Collectors
- A. Data Collection
 - B. Data Coding
 - C. Data Analysis

3.

- A. Programme Design
- B. Monitoring
- C. Human Resources
- D. Budget

Implementation & Monitoring

- A. Child Safeguarding**
 - Child safeguarding policy
 - Referral pathway
 - Training all staff
 - Awareness-raising with children and community
- B. Data Protection**
- C. Monitoring**
 - Data disaggregation
 - Programme monitoring
 - Measuring output and outcome indicators
 - Child-friendly feedback mechanisms
- D. Human Resources**
 - Recruitment
 - Learning and development
 - Supervision
 - Staffcare and safety
- E. Coordination**
 - Coordination among child protection actors
 - Coordination with UN, government and other organisations
 - Coordination with other sectors

5.

- A. Generating & Documenting Learning
- B. Evaluation

The implementation and monitoring phase aims at implementing a project for CAAFAG and conducting regular monitoring, taking into consideration the perspectives of children. It includes 1) Child safeguarding, 2) Data protection, 3) Monitoring, 4) Human Resources and 5) Coordination sections.

A. Child safeguarding²⁹³

What is child safeguarding?

Child safeguarding is what every organisation that works with or for children needs to put at the heart of everything they do, every day. They need to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, ensuring that not a single child gets exposed to abuse, and that any concerns about children's safety are reported to the appropriate authorities.

Preventing child abuse in organisations takes more than policies and procedures, it requires leadership, accountability and culture change. It means listening to children and transforming the entire mission of your organisation to put their rights, dignity, and safety at the heart of every decision.²⁹⁴

During conflict, violence against children increases. Services and traditional protection systems can break down. Power imbalances often increase, leading to amplified risks of sexual abuse, exploitation and other forms of harm. The control of resources, services and opportunities, which NGO workers often have, is a form of power that can be used to abuse or exploit children and their families.

Most humanitarian workers do act with compassion and professionalism, however some will fail in their duty of care while others will deliberately seek out, create or exploit opportunities to abuse children and adults.

CAAFAG in particular are exposed to risks of abuse due to their experience of violence. Girls and boys may display aggressive behaviours that may not be understood as a sign of distress and that may be difficult to handle. Experiences of sexual abuse, lack of self-esteem or isolation may also increase their vulnerability to abuse.

Every organization implementing programmes with children, including CAAFAG, should establish a child safeguarding policy and measures to prevent, document and respond to abuse of children by its personnel. This is essential to protect children who are affected by conflict from further harm.

Child safeguarding policy

You should have your own policy that states commitments and responsibilities in protecting children from harm, reporting procedures, consequences of breaching the policy and responsibility for implementation, compliance and measurement.

Here is an example of a [Child Safeguarding policy](#) from Save the Children Sweden in case you do not have one.

Referral pathway

A referral pathway is a document that highlights the process by which children are referred to service providers and community-level structures based on specific types of child protection threats, violations and vulnerabilities.

You need a referral pathway for various purposes, including for referring children exposed to violence and abuse identified through feedback and monitoring mechanism, as part of the child safeguarding policy. If your organisation has a case management system in place, the children will be referred to the caseworkers who already have a referral pathway in place. Otherwise, you should refer the child to another agency providing case management.

1. The first step to develop a referral pathway is to map the services in each location in order to develop a resource directory/service mapping. The 3-4 W (Who, What, Where, When) usually developed by each cluster will be useful to get started, but you should complete it with government, community and private services.
2. The second step is to contact each service provider to know their target groups (age, sex, etc.), business hours, the cost, the contact details of a focal point, and if they can absorb an additional case load. You also need to assess the quality of services based on quality standard benchmarks.
3. The third step is the development of a referral pathway based on the various protection needs that may result from their association with armed forces and armed groups, or any other protection concerns and based on the resource directory/service mapping.

You can use [Child Fund 2015. Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection Referral Pathways : A resource manual](#) and the [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. 2019 Inter agency Child Protection Case Management SOP for Template](#) to guide the development of your referral pathway.

**Tools:**

- Sample of service mapping/resource directory
- Sample of referral pathway

Training all staff

You should train all your staff on child safeguarding, including a code of conduct with dos and don'ts and internal reporting mechanisms to a designated Child Safeguarding focal point within the organisation or through a hotline. The training should include discussions of particularly vulnerable groups such as CAAFAG. You need to organize annual refresher sessions for all staff after their first training.

Staff must also be trained on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

You can use your agency's training if you have one or use [Keeping Children Safe Understanding Child Safeguarding: a facilitators guide](#)

Awareness-raising with children and community

Once the feedback and reporting system are in place and staff are trained, the next step is to inform the community. There should be discussions with all groups about the child safeguarding policy and how it works. It is also important to answer the questions they may have, hear their concerns, identify potential barriers and their insights to adjust the system if required.

Child safeguarding also includes the setting up of a feedback and reporting mechanism. Feedback and reporting mechanisms are systems that allow children and adult beneficiaries of a programme to report their feedback to the programmes they attend and any concerns they may have. This approach aims to reduce risk of harm, particularly for children, improve the programme quality, improve the relationship and acceptance by communities. ([See Monitoring – Child friendly feedback mechanism on p.133](#))

Complementary reading:

- [Save the Children \(2019\) Safeguarding in Emergencies Toolkit](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe Developing Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures](#)

293 Adapted from Save the Children (2019) Safeguarding in Emergencies Toolkit

294 Keeping Children Safe <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/introduction/>

295 Adapted from Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action Standard 18 Case Management

B. Data protection

Data protection is a key aspect of child safeguarding. CAAFAG is a sensitive protection concern in most countries and as a result, data about CAAFAG is highly sensitive and must be protected. Information that you collect through case management, including details related to recruiting armed groups, acts of violence, etc, and if is not well managed, can expose children to severe risks. Armed groups and forces and political actors may actively seek to access confidential information about former CAAFAG. Any breach of data confidentiality may lead to risks such as children's arrest, killing, reprisals, denial of access to services or exclusion from the community, as well as risk for your staff.

Data protection risks should be identified and addressed at the beginning of project implementation, before data are collected and throughout the implementation. The security situation deteriorates during the programme implementation, which may require updating the assessment.

Here are some measures to ensure the protection of CAAFAG data²⁹⁵:

- Conduct a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to assess the risk and identify risk mitigation measures
- Develop clear data protection and information sharing protocols in response to the specific risks and include mitigation measures identified during the assessment. Children's personal data and the sharing of data must be documented and managed using safe and appropriate systems, protocols and tools. The data protection and sharing protocols should be regularly reviewed based on the security situation.
- Train all staff involved in processing CAAFAG data (including information management and MEAL staff) on confidentiality, data protection and information sharing protocols. You can use the [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Information management for case management online series](#)
- Organisations collecting data must ensure confidentiality and control of access to identifiable information, based on the need-to-know and data minimisation principle.
- Use a secured information management system to manage case management information. Secured software such as [Primero](#) is recommended to manage case management data.

- If implementing case management services, use harmonized case management forms, in order to collect a minimum of standardized data for all cases and to easily transfer cases from one organisation to another if needed.
- Data related to CAFAAG status should ideally be gathered by trained caseworkers. When a child is provided with complementary services such as Education, MHPSS, and Livelihoods, documentation should not identify CAFAAG status, unless stringent data protection and information sharing protocols are in place.

Complementary reading:

- [ICRC. Handbook on data protection in humanitarian action](#)
- [UNICEF \(2015\) Good practice principles on Information Handling and Management in Child Protection Information Management Systems](#)
- [CPIMS+ Phase 1: Assessment and preparation](#)
- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2019\) Child protection Minimum Standard 5. Information Management](#)

Tools:

- Example of data protection protocol and information sharing protocol

C. Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing humanitarian intervention with indications of the extent of progress, achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds.²⁹⁶

Regular monitoring of programme interventions is always important in order to:

- Know whether the intervention achieves the intended outputs and outcomes for boys and girls
- Identify unintended consequences of the interventions regarding children
- Collect feedback on the methods of delivery of the interventions

- Verify the intervention is reaching the group of children initially targeted or if certain groups are under or over represented.

This information will allow your programme staff to adjust programme delivery models over the course of the project if needed.

Data disaggregation

All data collected during the monitoring phase should be disaggregated by sex and by age.

You can use the following age and sex groups:

- Girls 0-5
- Boys 0-5
- Girls 6-11
- Boys 6-11
- Girls 12-17
- Boys 12-17
- Women (above 18)
- Men (above 18)

Programme monitoring

Regular monitoring of activities is necessary to ensure the quality of activities. Monitoring can be conducted by your MEAL team, supervisors or programme staff. Effective programme monitoring, while managed by the MEAL focal point, requires involvement of all your staff involved in the implementation. Your programme activities should be monitored regularly to provide feedback to the implementers and encourage them to make improvements to the project delivery if necessary.

Here are examples of activities that you can monitor:

- Youth life skills sessions through observations of the sessions and feedback provided to the facilitators by their supervisors.
- Support to small business start-up through regular visits to children to monitor how they are managing their income generating activity and how they are keeping financial records.
- Registration of children in school through monitoring of school attendance sheet and grades, discussion with the teacher and the school principal to check social integration of children.
- Case management through regular visits to their family or in their alternative care arrangements.

Regular monitoring is particularly important for CAAFAG and for a long period of time (at least one year), to encourage them throughout the reintegration process, which is often hampered by stigma and rejection from family and community. This approach will also mitigate the risks of re-recruitment.

You should measure the indicators throughout the implementation of the project, instead of just at the end of the project, in order to chart correct programme implementation to reach the objectives and outcomes of your project. You would want to measure indicators at specific points such as baseline, mid-term if the project is long enough, and end-line. You would monitor activities over time to make sure they are on track and to ensure there are no unintended negative consequences.

Child-friendly feedback mechanisms²⁹⁷

Child-friendly feedback mechanisms are a key component of quality programming. A feedback mechanism allows you to capture and report the viewpoint of children, young people, community members and other partners about the organisation's work in order to improve it, including reporting complaints.

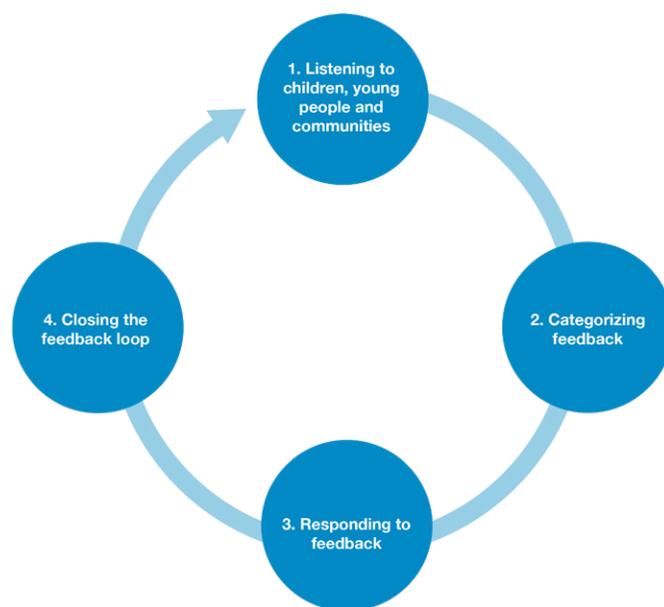
Feedback is the general term used for any viewpoint about or reaction to a product, service or performance. This can be positive as well as negative. Feedback can also include a suggestion for change or improvement. A complaint is a type of feedback which provides a negative reaction or viewpoint.

The information collected will help you and your staff to adjust your programmes activities to the needs of children. For instance accommodating various times and lengths of activities to allow boys and girls to attend, improving the space to ensure that all children feel safe to attend the activities, adapting the content to local culture and norms, etc.

Feedback mechanisms gives an opportunity to children to share their perspective on the services they receive and how to improve them in order to respond to their needs. It also offers the opportunity to report complaints and concerns, including sexual exploitation and abuse that may be perpetrated by staff or by other children or community members.

Feedback mechanisms should be child-friendly. Experience shows that when they are not intentionally designed with and for children and young people, they are often not utilised by them.

Here is an example of a feedback loop:



When designing a child-friendly feedback mechanism, consider the following steps:

1. Listening to children, young people and communities to collect their feedback.
2. Categorizing the feedback as an expression of gratitude, suggestion for improvement, request for information, request for assistance, dissatisfaction with service provided, urgent issues. Urgent issues include a breach of child safeguarding policy, a breach of code of conduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse and a security issue.
3. Responding to feedback and complaints. Feedback categorized as urgent issues should be immediately shared with the child safeguarding focal point and management. The other categories are shared with the relevant team to review and address all feedback and concerns.
4. Closing the feedback loop includes informing children, young people and communities of what the organisation did and ask them if they are satisfied with the actions taken.

Child-friendly reporting channels may include:

- **Face-to-face meetings:** children may provide feedback during group discussions, group or wider community meetings.

²⁹⁶ OECD/DAC (2012)

²⁹⁷ Adapted from Plan International 2018 Child-friendly feedback mechanisms Guide and toolkit

- **Peers:** older children often prefer to collect feedback among themselves and report collectively or via a group representative.
- **NGO feedback/safeguarding focal point:** Particularly safeguarding and other sensitive concerns are most commonly reported to a trusted NGO staff member who acts as safeguarding focal point.
- **Writing:** Individually or in groups, children and young people write their feedback or suggestions in the form of a written note, letter or proposal. Suggestion boxes are generally only effective in contexts with high literacy levels where providing direct written feedback is a common practice.
- **Phone helpline, SMS, Email and internet:** Phone hotlines, SMS, email and online platforms are increasingly used by older adolescents and young people with mobile connectivity to receive information, report incidents, and provide feedback or file complaints.

Complementary reading:

- [Plan International 2018 Child-friendly feedback mechanisms Guide and toolkit](#)

D. Human resources

In Child Protection, Human Resources are the cornerstone of quality programmes. Recruiting qualified personnel, building their capacities, providing supervision and ensuring their safety and care are critical to achieve positive outcomes for CAAFAG.

Recruitment²⁹⁸

In contexts of ongoing conflicts, it is often difficult to recruit qualified staff with the required educational background and relevant experience. Based on your context, you may have to compromise on some criteria. However, to achieve the outcomes we seek for children, it is essential that all staff are literate and demonstrate a capacity for working with children.

Staff and volunteers in contact with CAAFAG should speak the language of the children and be aware of cultural, religious and identity-based sensitivities and norms. The managers and officers should speak the agency's working language. Be aware of ethnic and inter-group differences, and seek an appropriate balance of persons from the refugee or internally displaced persons (IDP) community and the host community when staffing teams if relevant.

CAAFAG programme staff should aim for equal numbers of men and women. It can be more difficult to recruit female staff in some contexts. Assess how you can be more flexible on the recruitment criteria to ensure gender balance and give opportunities to women to access formal and on-the-job training to learn and build their careers.

In addition to the requirements of local authorities and your organization's usual recruitment process, consider the following when recruiting staff:

- Develop a job description using the Competency Framework: drafting of job description
- Advertise the positions on various online networks, newspapers and information boards in strategic locations. Consider Universities, social media, including sector specific professional groups relevant to the positions you are looking for, as well as community-based networks.
- Select candidates based on their CV and invite them to take an anonymous written test. This approach will help you shortlist top candidates for the interview more quickly, especially when you have a lot of positions to recruit for. Conduct a written test to assess writing skills and basic knowledge for leadership positions, such as manager's position as well as officer's positions. The written test may include, based on the position, questions about their knowledge of child protection, the specific needs of CAAFAG and some case studies on how they would respond to a particular situation.
- Consider conducting a practical exercise with children for positions that are in contact with children, such as recreational facilitators.
- Shortlist candidates based on written test results and conduct a reference check through former employers and community-based stakeholders to determine how trustworthy an applicant is, and to collect more information on their background and character within the community. It is critical that there is community agreement regarding the personnel hired, particularly for community mobilizers. The feedback and information from this reference check should be considered in the final selection process, but should not be the ultimate determining factor.
- Conduct the interview with selected candidates, using an interview questionnaire focusing on technical expertise. You can find examples of the interview questionnaire in the CPHA Competency Framework and Interview Planning. (2. Sample blended interview questions & evaluations)

Key factors to consider in making final decisions on staff recruitment

- Consider candidates' prior experience in working with children. It is important to balance the recruitment process and the need to find qualified individuals with the risk of removing those highly qualified staff from schools and other social support services that may already exist in the community. Whenever possible, avoid hiring candidates who are already supporting other social services.
- Preferably, candidates should be familiar with basic child protection issues, be able to identify risks for children and understand how to communicate with children. They should also be able to use child-centred facilitation practices for positions in contact with children and young people. If they do not have this relevant prior experience, ensure candidates show a strong interest and ability to gain this knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that candidates understand and support the concept of child participation and child safeguarding.
- Prioritize local recruitment of staff, take into consideration the dynamic of ethnic groups in the project implementation in each community, and explore opportunities to recruit older youth, including former CAAFAG.

Complementary reading:

- Learning and Development Working Group – 2021 CPHA Competency Framework

📎 Tools

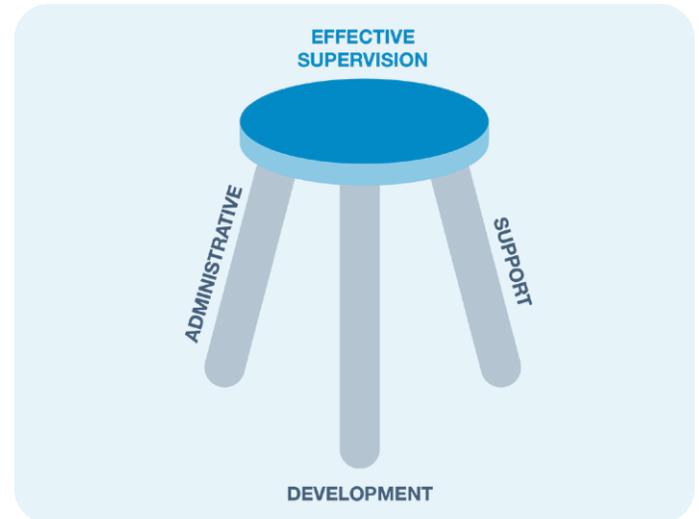
- Interview Planning
- Drafting of job description

Supervision²⁹⁹

Supervision is the relationship between a supervisor and an employee or volunteer. It is understood as collaborative and complementary, rather than hierarchical. Good supervision is characterized by the methods and attitudes of coaching. It serves the project staff and relates to the children we serve, particularly for personnel in direct contact with children, such as caseworkers, Interim Care Centre facilitators, those carrying out peacebuilding/education/livelihood activities with children and youth.

Supervision is critical to quality programming. Staff who feel supported, encouraged and who are given opportunities to learn and develop will more likely perform better, promote staff retention and lead to better protection of children.

There are 3 functions of supervision, administrative and accountability, educational and developmental, and supportive.



The administrative and accountability function aims to support competent and accountable practice. It focuses on recruitment and orientation, performance management process, planning, assigning and overseeing the quality of work, coordinating with other actors and reinforcing safety and ethical standards, particularly for personnel in working with children.

The educational and professional development function aims to ensure that personnel are continually updating their knowledge and skills. It relates to assessing and strengthening competencies and core values, developing personal learning plans, promoting reflective practice, critical thinking and decision making. It also includes the reinforcement of guiding principles.

Each staff working in child protection, including staff implementing programmes for CAAFAG, should employ and role model fundamental values, known as Core Values. They include Empathy, Integrity, Diversity and inclusion and Accountability with a set of indicators. Supervisors in their education and professional development function should assess and promote these core values.³⁰⁰

298 Adapted from the International Rescue Committee (2016) SHLS manager's guide

299 This section is adapted from the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2018) Case management supervision and coaching training package

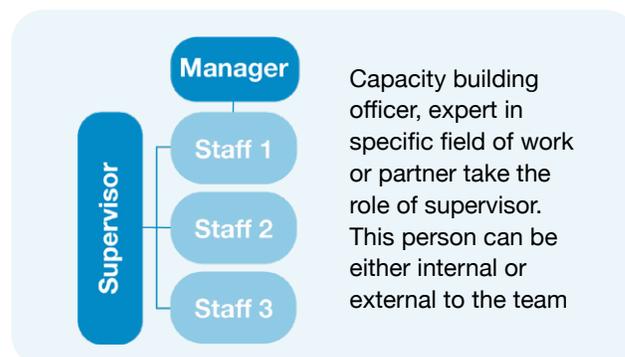
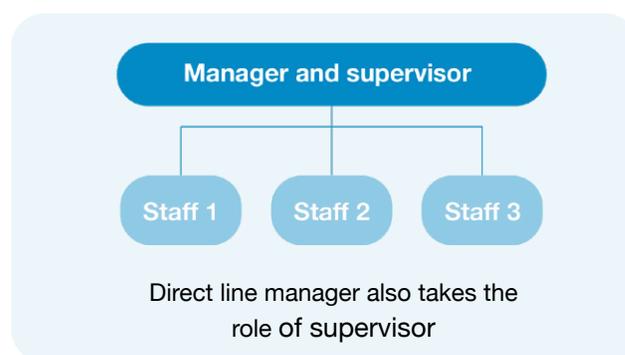
300 The Alliance for Child protection in Humanitarian Action 2020 – Competency Framework

CORE VALUE	INDICATORS
Empathy	Identifies the feelings of self and others
	Shows concern for others by responding to them according to their emotional and physical states and needs
	Puts her/himself in another person's shoes
	Listens actively and with an open mind to what another communicates in words, tone, body language and omission
	Acknowledge and values other people's perspectives and differences
Integrity	Maintains high ethical standards
	Takes clear ethical stands
	Addresses untrustworthy or dishonest behaviour in a timely manner and with respect
	Makes decisions based on ethical standards
	Exerts power and authority with humility and respect
	Conducts and fosters transparent team communications and CAAFAG programming
	Embeds principles, values and ethics into policy and CAAFAG programming
Diversity and inclusion	Treats all people with dignity and respect
	Shows respect and sensitivity towards gender, cultural and religious differences
	Challenges own/others' prejudices, biases, preferences, styles and intolerance
	Encourages diversity and inclusion
Accountability	Promotes the set-up of child friendly feedback mechanisms
	Welcomes, accepts and manages all received complaints in a timely manner
	Uses funds and resources in line with donors rules and communicates deviations in a timely manner

The supportive function aims to promote emotional and psychological wellbeing of staff. It includes the creation of a safe space for reflection on their practice, the promotion of self-care, normalizing feelings, setting professional boundaries and the recognition of their work.

It is not necessarily the same person fulfilling all the supervision functions. A supervisor can be different from the line manager, such as a technical supervisor or an external consultant. For instance, your staff may be directly managed by the field manager for the administrative function and be supervised by a technical expert, including the educational and professional development and supportive functions. For example, if you implement MHPSS activities, best practice recommends MHPSS facilitators to be supervised by a professional psychologist who can be an external consultant or a member of the team. Similarly, if you implement case management, caseworkers should receive supervision from experts in case management, whether internally or from partner organizations.

Here are illustrations of two supervision structures.



301 Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)
 302 Across Organisations Mentoring Platform
 303 Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)

Complementary reading

- [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – 2018 Case management supervision and coaching training package](#)

Learning and development

Learning and development refers to the means by which skills, competences and abilities are created and developed.³⁰¹ Learning and development is a core component of human resource strategy to retain qualified staff and ensure maximum motivation and performance of Child Protection teams.

In contexts of conflict, the pressure from donors, senior management, and from beneficiaries to start the activities quickly is often very high. However, staff and volunteers who are not properly trained before interacting with children may cause unintended harm.

Learning and development is an ongoing process in which supervisors can support by setting objectives, reviewing performance, providing feedback, and ongoing advice, resources or opportunities to facilitate learning. They also support the identification of gaps and promote the development of specific technical skills through the development of learning action plans. [The Practitioner and manager performance evaluation tool](#) from the Learning and Development Working Group can be useful to review performance.

Learning and development includes various strategies such as onboarding of the team, on-the-job coaching, training and other learning opportunities as detailed below.

Onboarding

On the first day of work, the line manager and the supervisor (if relevant) share all relevant information about the position expectations, the project goals, communication and reporting lines. It also includes the ethics and values of the organisation.

On-the-job mentoring

Mentoring is a relationship in which a more experienced person (mentor) helps to guide and support a less experienced person (mentee). It is a learning and development partnership between someone with significant experience and someone who wants to learn from them. The mentoring relationship provides a reflective space to the mentee to reflect on an issue they are currently facing.³⁰² Line managers/supervisors can mentor their team members, as well as other staff who have more experience.

According to a survey conducted with field practitioners working on CAAFAG projects, the majority of professional learning is achieved through on-the-job mentoring. This process enables staff to acquire and practice skills to perform their job according to the expectations of the organization for this position.

An [introduction to coaching and mentoring online course](#) is available on Kaya to develop participants' understanding of coaching and mentoring benefits when working in an emergency context.

Training

Training is a specific approach to learning and development in which facilitators 'teach' participants in order that they can achieve agreed learning objectives. This 'teaching' is done using prepared materials and methodologies and should always be based on andragogy and adult learning principles (thus will differ from methods used to teach children). This is usually conducted face-to-face but they can be remotely facilitated.³⁰³ Internal or external members of your organisation can conduct the training.

Some training should be mandatory for your staff, particularly for staff working directly with children. It is highly recommended to train all staff on the following training before they interact with children:

- **Child safeguarding:** this training will support induction and provide an introduction to child safeguarding to new staff or facilitate a refresher event with the aim to:
 - Create an understanding of child safeguarding,
 - Raise knowledge and awareness of how to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns,
 - Use child safeguarding policies and procedures, and
 - Clarify individual and organisational roles and responsibilities.

You can use your own agency's training if you have one or use [Keeping Children Safe Understanding Child Safeguarding: a facilitators guide](#)

- **Psychological first aid for children:** this training aims to develop skills and competences that will help your staff reduce the initial distress of children who have recently been exposed to a traumatic event. The training includes:
 - Tools for communication, reassurance and comfort of staff working directly with distressed children

- Advice and guidance for staff working with parents and primary caregivers
- Suggestions for ways to support a distressed child

You may add other skills-based training according to the requirements of the position. For instance, life skills facilitators should be trained on the life skills curriculum they will use or case workers should be trained on case management for child protection.

You can use your agency’s training or the [Save the Children Psychological First Aid training for Child Practitioners.](#)

The following table provides a list of training packages to consider in addition to programme specific curriculum training, based on various fields of work:

Fields of work	Suggested Training - Webinars
CAAFAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 CPIE E-Learning Module CAAFAG • ARC resource pack - 2009 Module 7 Children associated with armed forces and armed groups • Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – 2016 CPMS Video series Standard 11: Children associated with armed forces and armed groups
Project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management international certification
Case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – 2018 Case management supervision and coaching training package • Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – 2014 Child Protection Case management training for caseworkers, supervisors and managers • IRC – UNICEF 2015 Caring for Child Survivors Training Guide: User’s guide
Tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save the Children – 2017 A practice handbook: For family tracing and reunification in emergencies
Alternative care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICRC – 2014 Broken links: Psychosocial support for people separated from family members. Field guide and training • Save the Children – 2011 Children without Appropriate Care: Training manual for Asia and the Pacific • IRC – 2010 Training of Care caseworkers and foster carer
MHPSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IASC – 2009 Global toolkit of Orientation and Training Materials : Used to disseminate the IASC MHPSS Guidelines • Save the Children – 2018 Children’s Development and Wellbeing E-learning • ACT Alliance – 2018 Community based Psychosocial Support Training Manual • CRS – 2018 Introduction to trauma awareness and resilience: including a supplemental leader’s workshop and staff support session
Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC 2009 – Foundation Module 6: Community Mobilisation • Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – 2020 Community-level Child protection online learning series • Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – 2020 Strengthening community-level Child protection in Humanitarian Action: Capacity-building package facilitator guide
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF – 2009 The Psychosocial Care and Protection of Children in Emergencies: Teacher Training Manual

You can provide additional training to your staff to build their capacities over time, for instance training related to the specific needs of CAAFAG.

Additional learning methods

Your staff may build their knowledge and skills through other learning opportunities, such as readings, webinars, workshops, or peer learning through discussion groups on challenges and lessons learnt.

You can share key documents with your staff such as the Paris Principles so they can familiarize themselves with international standards, as well as assessment, evaluation or research documents.

You can also encourage your staff to attend webinars related to CAAFAG. Webinars are live, online learning events in which participants can obtain new knowledge and insights. They are concise and invite questions from the learners.³⁰⁴ Recordings are often available if they missed the live session.

Child Protection-related webinars can be found on the [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action site](#) or specifically about CAAFAG on the [CAAFAG Task Force](#) YouTube channels.

Workshops are another approach to learning and development where a group of people come together to work on a specific theme or issue. Usually facilitated, workshops are characterised by the group's direct engagement with the theme which is directly and currently applicable to their work.³⁰⁵ When possible, facilitate your staff's access workshop to build their knowledge and skills.

Complementary reading:

- [Learning and Development Working Group – 2021 CPHA Competency Framework Practitioner and manager performance evaluation](#)

Staff care and safety

Staff care

Happy, safe and healthy staff will have a positive impact on the quality of your programme.

Stress has various sources – pressure to reach high targets in a short period of time, conflict with the host community, stress generated by displacement, and so

on. In many cases, your staff are also directly affected by the conflict or disaster, which can further increase their stress. Interacting with CAAFAG who have experienced violence and may display aggressive behaviour can be very stressful for staff as well.

Stress can affect the motivation of your staff and their capacity to manage emotions, to be patient with children, or to resolve conflicts. As a result, stress can have a negative impact on the quality of the services you deliver and can affect your staff retention.³⁰⁶

We distinguish three forms of stress. 1) Positive stress, which you may encounter when taking an exam, for example. 2) Tolerable stress, which you may face when experiencing hardship, but you have the strengths and support to recover. 3) Toxic stress is when there is prolonged exposure to stress and when stress does not go down. Stress can then be cumulative and lead to burn-out. Burn out is an exhaustion of normal stress management mechanisms.

Staff care and self-care strategies will contribute to preventing toxic stress.

The diagram below illustrates the various forms of stress.³⁰⁷



Here are a few tips you can implement with your staff to reduce stress:

- Recognize the signs of stress – Suffering from stress in highly stressful circumstances is not unprofessional. Stress management starts with being aware that stress may cause problems and being able to recognize how these are manifested.
- Identify the source of stress – Once factors causing stress are identified, differentiate those that are inevitable from those which can be addressed by individual or group action.
- Implement stress management strategies such as:
 - Organize regular 1:1 meeting with the supervisor to discuss how the staff feels in the team and this/her work. This is giving a safe space to each employee to express their feelings and identifying strategies to mitigate stress.

304 Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)

305 Ibid

306 Adapted from the International Rescue Committee (2016) SHLS manager's guide

307 International Rescue Committee (2019)

- Weekly staff meetings with teams to give them opportunities to express concerns. Active listening is key, even if you don't have an answer for every problem raised; listening actively to staff concerns helps.
- Praise your team when they reach a target or solve a difficult problem.
- Encourage personal reflection on signs of stress and promote self-care strategies such as relaxation techniques during debriefing sessions.
- Promote “buddy support” which involves pairing-up staff members or setting up peer support groups to support each other, debrief after long and difficult days, and encourage each other.
- Organize social events with your team to encourage bonding, fun and relaxing time together.
- Offer external and neutral access to psychological support through individual sessions with professionals

Staff care also includes other components such as social benefit, medical care, disease outbreak risk mitigation measures which will have an impact on the wellbeing of your staff at work. Working conditions are also important to consider. For instance, women have in some places, specific needs in terms of office space such as separated toilets or gender segregated staff rooms. They may also have specific needs regarding transportation to field sites.

Staff care also encompasses the promotion of self-care. You may offer training opportunities to your employees to identify their personal signs of stress and positive self-care strategies. This will contribute to self-awareness and empower them with positive coping strategies to address their stress. ([See Case management training Module F – Self-care](#))

Safety

Implementing projects for CAAFAG, particularly in active conflict zones, may expose your staff and volunteers to security threats. Threats may come from community members who do not support programming from CAAFAG, from government authorities or from armed forces and armed groups.

The risk assessment analysis conducted during the context analysis will help your organisation and team identify potential risks, determine the risk level and identify mitigation measures.

You should have your own security policy and advice to ensure the safety of your staff as well as volunteers. Your staff should be trained on personal safety by your organisation. Online training such as the [UNDSS BSAFE training](#) can be useful to strengthen security awareness of your staff and volunteers.

In addition, you may consider the following strategies:

- No branding policy to keep a low profile
- Prioritize local recruitment of staff, take into consideration ethnic group dynamics in the project implementation community
- Identify community allies who can advocate for better acceptance of your project
- Collaborate with supportive local authorities who can help in case of a security incident
- Train staff on security measures and on how to protect themselves
- Provide emergency means of communication such as a Satellite phone or radio

In case of a security incident:

- Debrief immediately after the incident with your team about what happened
- Enquire how they feel, acknowledge their feelings and offer group and individual psychological support
- Identify strategies with your team and security focal points on how to mitigate the risks of similar incidents in the future
- Rethink the project implementation strategy with security focal points in case of significant increase of insecurity in the project locations

Complementary reading:

- [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. 2013 Case management training Module F – Staff care](#)
- [Wellness and resilience for frontline workers and managers online training - Kaya](#)

306 Adapted from the International Rescue Committee (2016) SHLS manager's guide

307 International Rescue Committee (2019)

E. Coordination

Coordination is essential when implementing programmes with CAAFAG, whether prevention, release or reintegration programmes. A coordinated response is recommended between child protection actors, with the government and UN agencies, as well as across sectors.

Coordination among Child Protection actors

CAAFAG programming requires a strong coordination mechanism among Child Protection actors due to its complexity, sensitivity and the risk of doing harm.

It is often the role of the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (sometimes referred to sub-cluster, sub-sector, or working group) for coordinating data collection and data analysis of active recruitment and use, such as conducting a context analysis. It is also their role to coordinate the involvement of Child Protection actors in the development and the roll out of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). SOP includes a referral pathway with key actors and their roles and responsibilities in each location for prevention, release and reintegration interventions. All child protection actors should know the responsibilities of each actor in order to, for instance, avoid duplication of prevention effort in the same locations; ensure harmonised and clear release procedures; and promote complementary reintegration strategies. For example, organisations who have different areas of expertise can provide complementary services to CAAFAG reintegrated in the same location.

Coordination with UN, government and other organisations

The government is often involved in CAAFAG programmes, particularly during the release and reintegration process. Coordination with the Ministry of Interior (through armed forces), the Ministry of Justice (if children are considered as perpetrators of criminal acts), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Education, for instance, may be required in the identification, release and reintegration of children. Their engagement ensures national ownership that may be lacking when the government is excluded from CAAFAG programming.

The UN through Peacekeeping missions, UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNHCR are frequently involved in CAAFAG interventions. Coordination among these actors and with Child Protection actors from the civil society is essential to know the roles and responsibilities of each actor and be able to leverage resources available to

support CAAFAG. For example, coordination of actors is necessary to contribute to the documentation of the 6 grave violations (Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism), particularly for the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups.

Coordination with organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross may be useful for the tracing of CAAFAG family members and cross border reunification, as well as the protection of rights of children in detention.



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Coordination with other sectors

Coordination with other sectors is specifically relevant to prevention and reintegration interventions. Child Protection actors have rarely have expertise in all the sectors that may be required in CAAFAG programming.

The following sectors may be involved based on needs, to provide services to former CAAFAG during their reintegration process and/or to improve access to services in remote areas as part of a prevention strategy:

- Health, including nutrition, reproductive and sexual health
- Mental health and psychosocial support, including specialised and non-specialised support
- Education, including formal and informal education
- Protection
- Livelihoods and Cash
- Justice
- Peacebuilding
- Water and sanitation
- Food security
- Shelter
- Gender Based Violence

The coordination with other sectors can be done at the agency level to identify the services available and focal points to include in a referral pathway for reintegration case management, for instance. It can also be led by the cluster to identify missing services in areas of active recruitment and advocate to the relevant sectors. In this situation, the Child Protection area of responsibility would coordinate and advocate to other relevant clusters.

Complementary reading:

Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 4 - Coordination

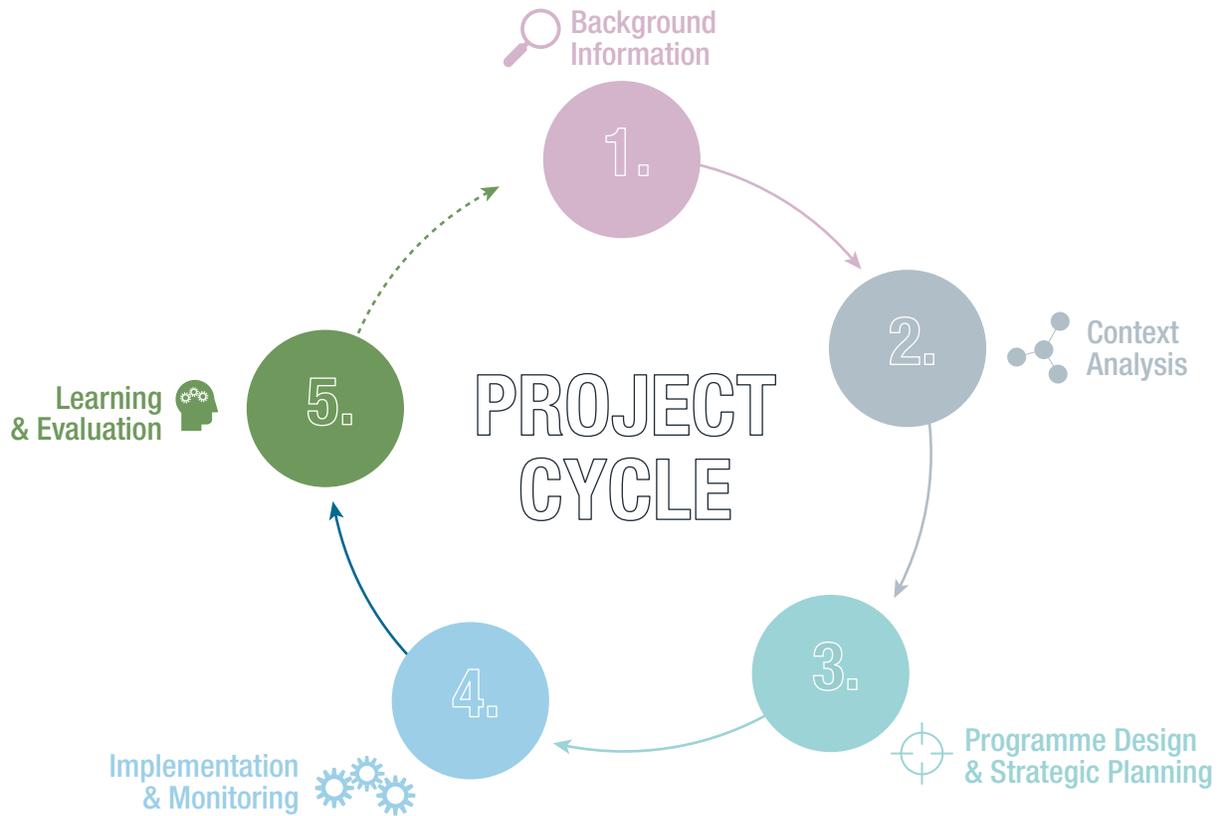


5. LEARNING AND EVALUATION



CAAFAG

Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines



1.

- A. Introduction to CAAFAG
- B. Legal and Normative Framework

2.

- A. Research Questions and Scope
- B. Methodology Selection
- C. Timeline
- D. Human Resources
- E. Budget

- A. Data Collection Plan
- B. Workplan
- C. Contextualizing the Tools
- D. Setting up a Referral Pathway
- E. Training of Data Collectors

- A. Data Collection
- B. Data Coding
- C. Data Analysis

3.

- A. Programme Design
- B. Monitoring
- C. Human Resources
- D. Budget

4.

- A. Child Safeguarding
- B. Data Protection
- C. Monitoring
- D. Human Resources
- E. Coordination



Learning & Evaluation

- A. Generating & Documenting Learning
- B. Evaluation

Learning from and evaluating our programmes is a key step to better understanding which interventions work, which do not, and which remain unproven. It encompasses a range of activities including generating and documenting learning on programme implementation and evaluation.

A. Generating and Documenting Learning

Documenting challenges and lessons learnt are critical to keep institutional memory as well as improving knowledge on CAAFAG programme implementation at sector level. Lessons learnt can be collected throughout project implementation through feedback and reporting mechanisms as well as your internal monitoring processes, including consultations with CAAFAG, focus group discussions, etc. Lessons learnt are not only successes but also challenges and attempts to address them, even if not always successful. It can also include the monitoring and documentation of unintended consequences, which can be either positive or negative. It encourages a more adaptive approach which values learning as an ongoing, reflective and actionable process to improve project implementation in real time.

These lessons learnt can be shared during the Child Protection Area of Responsibility meeting or the CAAFAG task force meeting to strengthen Child Protection actors' knowledge and encourage peer learning. This can also be done through the development of case studies and webinars shared with the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the global CAAFAG Task Force.

Examples of generating and documenting learning

CAAFAG and COVID

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the CAAFAG task force have documented lessons learnt from field actors in implementing CAAFAG programmes during the COVID-19 outbreak. A [key messages and considerations](#) document was developed highlighting issues related to prevention and response programming for CAAFAG in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the CAAFAG Task Force organized a series of webinars in [English](#) and [French](#) to share field actors lessons learnt.

Gaps and Needs for the successful reintegration of CAAFAG

The Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers has conducted research to document the constraints and challenges to the reintegration of CAAFAG. A [briefing paper](#) published in 2020 highlights the barriers that hinder successful reintegration. They identified that programmatic constraints result from the complexity of reintegration, its multi-sectoral, ever-changing and long-term nature, and the political and structural challenges that impede the effective implementation of programs. Additionally, reintegration programming faces a financing crisis, with funding for reintegration decreasing between 2006 and 2016 despite the proliferation of armed conflict.³⁰⁸

Community-based Child Protection - A strategy for protecting conflict-affected girls and boys: A case study from Central African Republic

In Central African Republic (CAR), Plan International uses a community-based child protection strategy to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of girls and boys. They developed a [case study](#) demonstrating the role of community-based child protection groups in protecting children in conflict-affected CAR. It documents key lessons learnt on the importance of intensive mentoring and support to community-based structures, especially in the first phase of the programme. It also highlights the need to provide technical and operational support to both local and national Government structures to support community-based groups and respond to identified cases.³⁰⁹

Complementary reading

Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 9 - Programme Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

B. Evaluation

Well-documented and reliable evaluations are required to develop a better understanding of the approaches and practices that are most effective to prevent recruitment, facilitate release and promote reintegration, and in which situations. They should not only seek to determine whether a programme has met its objectives, but also illuminate the nature and extent of changes in children's wellbeing as a result of programme interventions, and how the programme achieved these changes.³¹⁰

308 Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers (2020)

309 Plan International (2017)

310 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)

311 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)

312 ALNAP (2016)

313 Ibid

314 Duncan et al (2004)

315 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)

Various types of evaluation

There are various types of evaluations relevant to CAAFAG programming. It includes:

- **Project evaluation**, focusing on the evaluation of a single intervention with specific objectives
- **Programme evaluation**, focusing on a set of intervention with broader objectives
- **Sector evaluation**, focusing on multiple programmes and interventions which contribute to the achievement of a common goal
- **Impact evaluation**, focusing on the wider effects of the programme, including intended and unintended impact

For the purposes of this toolkit, we are considering a project evaluation. Additional information on the other forms of evaluation can be found in [ALNAP \(2016\) Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide](#).

Project evaluation

Project evaluation findings will provide valuable information for developing projects that are evidence-based, rather than based solely on personal belief or anecdotal evidence. Evaluation provides the means to improve programme performance and to build interagency consensus on effective practices.

Quality evaluations include the following actions:

1. Develop clear evaluation questions

The questions should be linked to the objectives and outcomes from the logframe, as well as assumptions related to prevention, release and reintegration outcomes. The questions will shape the evaluation, the methodology used and will define the information collected and the findings.³¹¹

The questions can be:

- **Descriptive** focusing on the features of the project e.g. *How CAAFAG safely exit armed forces and armed groups?*
- **Normative** focusing on standards e.g. *To what extent did the interim care centres meet international residential care standards?*
- **Causal** focusing on the factors that drive better support e.g. *To what extent did the provision of education services prevent recruitment and use?*
- **Action-oriented** e.g. *How could we better support CAAFAG family acceptance?*³¹²

The questions can also address various criteria:

- **Relevance** focusing on the extent to which programme activities are tailored to the needs of CAAFAG and their community e.g. *To what extent did the MHPSS programmes meet the needs of CAAFAG?*
- **Effectiveness** focusing on the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose e.g. *To what extent did the youth-led peacebuilding initiatives contribute to prevent the recruitment and use of girls and boys?*
- **Efficiency** focusing on the qualitative and quantitative outputs of achieved e.g. *How cost efficient was the livelihood intervention in promoting financial self-sufficiency?*
- **Impact** focusing on the wider effects of the project related to social, economic, individual etc effects. e.g. *What has been the impact of community-led initiatives on CAAFAG social acceptance?*³¹³
- **Sustainability** focusing on the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention will continue or are likely to continue. e.g. *Do the net benefits of economic recovery interventions remain one year after the end of the programme?*
- **Coherence** focusing on the consistency of humanitarian policies and human rights considerations. e.g. *How aligned are the agency policies on children's rights protection with Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Minimum Standards?*

2. Design the evaluation design

The methodology should be developed with the aim to generating data for analysing how the intervention has contributed to achieving the objective and the outcomes of the project and to respond to the evaluation questions. It includes avoiding or controlling bias and disrupting events.³¹⁴

Evaluation design includes:

- **Non-experimental** design that does not include comparison nor control groups. It is the most common type of design in child protection in humanitarian action. It is the most flexible design and at relatively low cost.
- **Experimental** design that includes randomized assisted and control groups. This design is not always best suited for evaluation in social science fields as many inputs influence the success of an intervention, including cultural appropriateness, how well the intervention fits with community conditions, and the availability of adequate resources, including human resources.³¹⁵

- **Quasi-experimental** design where comparisons are made either of the assisted group over time, or between the assisted and a comparison group selected after the start of the assistance.³¹⁷

3. Identify indicators

Output and outcome indicators will allow the measurement of quantifiable change. Outcome indicators will support practitioners to generate enough data to build an argument for evidence-based practice and to measure these indicators at various points, when possible, throughout the program's lifespan. You can also consult communities in the development of indicators, rather than relying on your own assumptions to define contribution to change.

4. Establish a sample size and criteria

A sample is a subset of the population that contains the characteristics of the larger population. The size of the sample should ensure that enough data is collected and triangulated to be able to draw conclusions. (See chapter 12 [ALNAP \(2016\) Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide](#))

5. Adhere to ethical standards

All evaluation processes should ensure the principles of dignity, safety and confidentiality of participants and data collectors. This includes asking for informed consent or assent of children and adults, ensuring confidentiality, being inclusive, respecting local culture and values, ensuring the wellbeing and safety of all participating children, considering unintended consequences; and striving to build capacity and incorporate participatory action to the greatest extent possible.

Evaluations that involve children should adhere to the principles of best interest and do no harm and establish a referral pathway in case of disclosure.³¹⁷

6. Conduct a data survey

Baseline data is needed to reliably measure change over time. A baseline is essential to be able to compare data from the beginning of an intervention to the end to determine the change in children's wellbeing.³¹⁸

7. Choose an appropriate methodological approach

The choice of method will depend on the questions being asked. Triangulate the data if different sources or methods have been used. Utilizing different methods can also uncover more information about the true measure and the potential weaknesses of any given method.

8. Collect data over time

In addition to a baseline, a monitoring system should be established to collect data over time. Collecting

data over time for use in evaluation analysis will lead to being in a stronger position to conclude that any changes are linked to programme interventions.

9. Establish a counterfactual analysis when possible

A counterfactual analysis allows a comparison between what happened and what hypothetically may have happened in the absence of an intervention. It describes a situation in the form of: "If the intervention had not occurred, the outcomes for children would not have occurred." The impact of the intervention is then estimated by comparing the counterfactual outcomes to those observed under the intervention. A counterfactual analysis will allow for a study of results against a baseline. This requires that a theory of change that uses a counterfactual analysis is included in the intervention design. Counterfactual analysis enables the attribution of cause and effect between an intervention and its outcomes.

10. Analyse and interpret the data

Data analysis is the process of determining whether there are trends or patterns in the data and determining what findings can be made from the data available. Interpretation of data assigns a meaning to the information analysed and determines its significance and implications with regards to programme outcomes.

11. Link programme outcomes to effects on girls and boys

An evaluation must link the outcomes of a programme and the process that was undertaken to any improvements to children's well-being. It is important that this process determines positive outcomes as well as any unintended consequences. Programme interventions will have varying outcomes according to the different needs of its beneficiary population. Since different groups of children may experience interventions differently, and since well-being is influenced by a wide variety of internal and external factors, the evaluation should exercise caution when determining the cause of improvements to children's well-being before attributing them solely to programme interventions.³¹⁹

Complementary reading

- [The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action \(2021\) Defining Evidence -Based practice for Application in Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: a position paper](#)

317 Boothby et al. (2006)

318 Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Emergencies

319 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021)

Child participation

Field practitioners are strongly encouraged to involve children in programmes' evaluation they were part of when it is possible and safe. Children, particularly former CAAFAG, who participate in prevention, release and reintegration interventions have their own opinion about the outcomes of these interventions. They may have very different perceptions than adults on the success of an activity for instance.

The following steps are recommended to involve children in evaluations:

Child safeguarding and ethical guidelines

Before consulting children, it is critical to set ethical guidelines and ensure child safeguarding throughout the evaluation process. ([See 4.A Child Safeguarding on p.130](#)).

Ethical guidelines should focus on:

- **Child safeguarding:** develop or use a code of conduct and child safeguarding policy for the duration of the evaluation
- **Safety of children:** run a risk assessment and identify risk mitigation measures using the Risk assessment analysis tools. ([See Context analysis phase 1. B Risk assessment on p. 38](#))
- **Referral:** set up a referral pathway to ensure that child protection concerns and disclosure are dealt with appropriately and sensitively ([See 4.A Child Safeguarding - Referral pathway on p. 130](#))
- **Diversity:** ensure that the diversity of children's experiences is captured
- **Non-discrimination:** ensure that discrimination is explored and non-discrimination is practiced

Training of data collectors

All data collectors who will be in contact with children should be trained in child-friendly and effective communication, child safeguarding policy, safe identification and referral and on how to use the data collection tools.

Development of indicators

During an evaluation, you should involve children in the development of indicators as well as indicator criteria, particularly for outcome indicators. You can use the same methodology for developing indicator criteria as for the logframe. You can use the same methodology as to develop indicator's criteria for the logframe. ([see 3.B Monitoring Development of culturally sensitive](#)

[indicators on p. 106](#)) This is critical to ensure that the indicators and criteria are contextualized to local and cultural understanding. A participatory workshop will allow children to express the outcomes of the programme that are important to them, to be able to develop indicators and criteria for these indicators. For example, children may express that safety in accessing service is important. The agreed upon indicator could be: *How girls formerly associated with AFAG safely access reproductive health services?* You should involve girls in the definition of what "safe access" means to them. This definition may vary depending on the context. Another example could be: *To what extent did community-led release mechanisms contribute to the release of CAAFAG?* You would need to involve children in the definition of release.

Identification of appropriate methodologies and tools

Data collected through a child friendly feedback mechanism ([see Child friendly feedback mechanisms on p. 133](#)) during programme implementation are a very good source of information. You may identify trends of feedback which are positive or negative as well as variations based on actions taken to address feedback.

Surveys conducted with children and their families after accessing services are also a valuable source of information.

Additionally, you may consider the selection of age-appropriate and participatory tools to capture children's perception of the programme as well as progress against the indicators set by and for them.

Here are few example of tools:

- **Focus group discussions** allow boys and girls to explore diverse experiences according to various factors such as their gender, age, ethnicity, etc.
- **H assessment** is a monitoring and evaluation tool to explore the strengths and weaknesses of an intervention and to suggest actions to improve.
- **Timeline** is a participatory tool to explore and share significant processes, successes and challenges achieved over time through a programme.
- **Flower Map** is a visual tool to explore which people provide support to children and young people.

Additional information about these tools can be found in [A Kit of Tools for participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults](#).

Restitution to children

After the end of the evaluation, it is important to share the findings of the evaluation with children and the community. It promotes accountability to children and their families, local ownership of programme interventions and it contributes to building a trustful relationship with communities.

Complementary reading

- [Save the Children \(2010\) A Kit of Tools for participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults](#)

Challenges due to security

Security issues may make it difficult or impossible in conflict environments to reach children and their families. Before starting your evaluation, consider the following questions:

- What are the main risks that the evaluation faces in this context?

These may include:

- Operational risks such as the personal security of the evaluators and potential disruption to the programme if resources are diverted to the evaluation
- Financial risks if there are additional costs associated with working in an insecure environment, and
- Protection risks to which the affected population may be exposed if they participate in the evaluation
- What are the implications of these risks for the evaluators' access to affected populations?
- What secondary and other data are available if the evaluators cannot gain access to the affected population?
- What other options are available to the evaluators to gain access to the affected population?
- How will this affect the credibility of the evaluation?
- What are the possible alternatives to an evaluation, for example a reflective learning workshop with staff, peer learning among agencies, or more limited evaluative activity?

Where possible, explore creative ways of carrying out the evaluation remotely. The following techniques may help to overcome constrained access:

- Use local evaluators to carry out interviews with the community members, children and their families
- Carry out surveys online, by phone and/or SMS
- Interview members of the affected population in accessible areas
- Collect crowd-sourced data on social media

Be clear about any constraints you may have faced in presenting your findings and writing your report. Make sure not to generalise your findings for locations and populations that you have not been able to reach.³²⁰

Example of creative ways to overcome access constraints

Bringing members of the affected population to more accessible areas

In evaluating an IDP programme in Democratic Republic of Congo, it was important for Groupe URD, the evaluation team, to speak to the affected population directly. Obtaining access to the settlements would, however, have involved passing through rebel-held territory. Although foreigners were at risk of being kidnapped, male IDPs could transit relatively safely through the area. Local partners had previously taken advantage of this to distribute of assistance items. Therefore, Groupe URD developed precise criteria to help the IDP population select a range of representatives (e.g. farmers, religious or traditional chiefs). Four or five representatives per settlement were thus selected and were asked to travel to a secure village to be interviewed. IDPs also had the option of identifying someone who was already in the village whom they felt could accurately speak on their behalf. To make the trip worthwhile, local partners offered the representatives supplies that they could take back to their communities. The downside of this kind of approach is that the evaluators cannot control whom the community will choose. Only those who can pass through the insecure area can come (for example female representatives cannot travel in certain conditions).³²¹

Complementary reading

- [ALNAP \(2016\) Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide](#)
- Paris Principles Steering Group (2022) Paris Principles Operational Handbook Chapter 9 - Programme Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

320 ALNAP (2016)

321 ALNAP (2016)

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