



CPMS Video Series - Facilitator's Notes

Standard 11 – Children associated with armed forces or armed groups

Background: This document was created to promote the use of the Standard 11 video. It is intended to prompt discussion among people who have watched it and want to learn more about the topic, as well as to reflect collectively on how the standard is or could be implemented in their context. It could be used as part of a coordination meeting, briefing session, orientation or training workshop.

Discussion Points:

Message 1: Invest in Prevention!

- 1.1 What do we see as current/potential causes of recruitment and use of children?
- 1.2 What measures are in place at the a) organizational and b) community levels to prevent these practices?
Who is doing what on prevention?

Things to stress

- Prevention is a multi-layered process, which needs adequate resourcing. It should draw in governments, armed forces, local activists, communities, peacekeepers, donors, and most of all children and their families.
- Children's participation in conflict starts with their recruitment, and so prevention must start there too. It's important to examine factors that create boys and girls' vulnerability to recruitment and use by armed groups and armed forces.
- A recruitment prevention strategy based on a set of practical, sustainable measures is essential. Such measures range widely across the child protection spectrum. They should include at minimum; effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms; prohibitions in law, policy and administrative practice, including criminalization based on a minimum recruitment age of 18; independently verifiable proof of age (ideally resulting from universal birth certification); effective processes to verify the age of recruits (putting the burden of proof on the recruiter, not the recruit); sufficient capacity within the criminal justice system to hold those recruiting unlawfully to account; and assessing analyzing and addressing core problems that increase "voluntary" recruitment.
- This prevention strategy (incorporating national awareness-raising, communication and education campaigns reaching out to at-risk communities) should also aim to bring about a change in perception of children's role in armed conflict, and association with military forces. This is not only at government level and among the recruiters, but also in the communities they recruit from. "Push" as well as "pull" factors need to be addressed.
- Military assistance, security sector reform programmes and some other donor assistance packages (e.g rule of law, support for conflict resolution) can play their part in these prevention strategies. The broader the base of participation in strategy, and its implementation, the better the chances of success.

Message 2: Make everyone aware of their rights and responsibilities

2.1 Why is this so important?

2.2 What were the critical “sticking” points with previous awareness campaigns?

2.3 Have we tried to mainstream the issues facing CAAFAG and engage other key actors?

Things to stress

- Awareness-raising is central to enhancing preparedness. Creating a broader understanding of rights, needs and responsibilities – at local, regional and national levels – has a positive effect on prevention of recruitment, on normative change, early warning, and redress.
- Knowledge and understanding can be a real catalyst for change. Local activists, local leaders, local military leaders can all make a difference, if the legal and other arguments against children’s participation in conflict are more widely known, and understood.
- Tailor your approach to the specific place and moment in time. Work with local people (NGOs, local authorities, communities and others) to craft your context-specific messages and materials. See them as partners from the outset, and not just a prospective audience.
- Awareness-raising should be done early and often. But it can add value anytime. Creating a dynamic of monitoring and oversight of shared information, as awareness training should, always empowers local communities. And shifts in policy at a national level can both result from, and be reinforced by local awareness-raising, thereby consolidating processes of change.
- Make awareness-raising an integral part of your strategy, and not just an afterthought. Broad-based participation on all sides – so include donors and NGOs - makes it more likely that the key messages will get across.

Message 3: Work with Communities and Children – they are valuable assets!

3.1 What resources are available in the community for prevention, release and reintegration efforts? How do we involve former CAAFAG themselves? In our interactions with community members, are we stressing their strengths and our desire for effective partnerships?

3.2 What does the community see as problematic?

Things to stress

- The release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups requires full community buy-in. Reintegration efforts should include other vulnerable children with support from the community.
- A reintegration strategy should be developed and be community-based.
- It also requires the availability of adequate and predictable resources (both financial and technical).
- Reintegration should be an investment to support both children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, and those that are affected by armed conflict that are in the community.
- Communities have resources and assets. Work closely with parents, families and the community in the reintegration of its children. It can contribute to reconciliation in the community and forms a crucial element of child protection.
- Involve children where appropriate and safe, take their views into account and keep them informed in the decisions that concern them throughout their reintegration.

Message 4: Provide adequate support to children and monitor what happens in their reintegration

- 4.1 Are there adequate financial and human resources to ensure tailored, quality support? In practical terms, what can we with our community partners do about gaps?
- 4.2 Do we have a clear reintegration strategy? Have we achieved a good balance between helping children who have been released and their peers who are vulnerable in other ways?
- 4.3 Do we have a functioning case management system in place? What can be done to improve it?
- 4.4 Do we have common assessment tools to determine increased intervention and eventually case closure?
- 4.5 Are there any sticking points in coordination and collaboration? What can we do to address them?

Things to stress

- Get the size and the price right - 'No-One-Size-Fits-All' in case planning and management of reintegration interventions. The needs of children differ, and our programme interventions must suit the needs of every child when providing education, psychosocial support, livelihood opportunities, medical and legal services.
- Taking a strengths-based service planning and provision approach, reintegration should take a more balanced and comprehensive view of the child needs, family's capacity and the available resources at community level to allow for the selection of more feasible interventions that are more likely to produce a family investment in the service plan.
- Develop a care plan for each child, and closely monitor their welfare during their reintegration in their communities.

Overall:

- Do we need to expand our teams to ensure adequate staffing for all phases of programming? If yes, how do we do that?
- How do we ensure our response is sustainable and feeds into longer term child protection programming?
- Have we considered if and how the 10 CPiE principles are being upheld through our work?
- Are we linking with efforts to implement other relevant standards: human resources, communication/advocacy/media, case management, sexual violence, MHPSS, community-based child protection, justice etc.
- What training opportunities do we have and do we need to create?
- Have we mapped our human, financial and community resources?

Key Resources (created after the publication of the CPMS):

- Release & Reintegration Field Handbook (Paris Principles Working Group, forthcoming)
- Training materials: relevant modules in CPWG's Face-to-Face CPiE package (2014) and Action for the Rights of the Child (revised 2013); training pack tied to Release and Reintegration Field Handbook (forthcoming)