



Safeguarding Children in UN Peacekeeping Operations

Guide to the Toolkit



Keeping
Children
Safe



University of
Reading



Arts & Humanities
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The purpose of this guide is to provide an introduction to the toolkit that Keeping Children Safe and the University of Reading can provide to organisations involved with UN Peacekeeping operations to assess and improve the extent to which children are safeguarded from harm within those contexts.

The guide provides a self-audit tool, an example of a risk assessment and an explanation of how the project team can work with the organisation to create a toolkit that will improve and implement child safeguarding.

The guide and full toolkit are based on international laws and standards, with an emphasis on four central standards:

#1 Policy

The organisation develops a policy that describes how it is committed to preventing, and responding appropriately to, harm to children.

#2 People

The organisation places clear responsibilities and expectations on its staff and associates and supports them to understand and act in line with these.

#3 Procedures

The organisation creates a child-safe environment through implementing child safeguarding procedures that are applied across the organisation.

#4 Accountability

The organisation monitors and reviews its safeguarding measures.

What is Child Safeguarding?

Child safeguarding is the responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations and programmes do no harm to children, that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities.

“Do no harm” is a principle that has been used in the humanitarian sector but can equally be applied to the development field. It refers to organisations’ responsibility to minimise the harm they may be doing inadvertently as a result of their organisational activities.

Definitions of Harm

It is difficult to define “harm” to children because children can be abused in so many ways depending on the context and culture. They may be abused in a family, an institution, community or faith setting, or via social media/internet. They may be harmed by an adult or adults or another child or children. There are also practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced or early marriage that cause significant harm to children.

The following definitions can be used as a guide:

Physical abuse

Actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. It may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Sexual abuse

Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching.

It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child sexual exploitation

A form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol.

The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim’s options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual.

Child sexual exploitation manifests in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods. It may also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

Neglect and negligent treatment

Allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child’s healthy physical, spiritual,

moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.

Emotional abuse

Persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber-bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Commercial exploitation

Exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

Think global, act local: measures in contexts

Child safeguarding measures must be integrated in an organisation's systems and processes for both different country and local contexts.

The measures have to work for the local context but also adhere to global and regional standards.

Definitions of “child” and “child abuse” may differ according to national and cultural understandings. However, organisations need to be clear that ‘children’ are defined as anyone less than 18 years of age and that “abuse” is the range of acts, intentional or otherwise, which harm children.

There need to be consultations with staff across the organisation in order to give clear guidance on these issues and how to respond when concerns arise. Child safeguarding measures must be sensitive to the local culture but the issue who is a child and what constitutes abuse is clearly set out in global and regional standards and frameworks and must be applied across the board.

Organisational systems and processes for running organisational business may differ across offices, regions and countries. They must be risk assessed in each locality and strategies developed for integrating child safeguarding where relevant.

Organisations also need to be prepared to take action locally when concerns arise. They will therefore need to have information on local services, authorities to whom reports should be made, and organisations working locally, which can provide support where needed.

Safeguarding Children: Self-Audit Tool

This self-audit tool is an ideal way to measure how near or far your organisation is from meeting the standards on making children safe, and where you need to improve.

The idea is based on the work of George Varnava with the former Forum on Children and Violence, NCB (National Children's Bureau). With permission from Varnava, the NSPCC adapted the material for use as an audit tool and Keeping Children Safe has since aligned it to the Keeping Children Safe Standards.

Read the following statements and decide whether, for your organisation, each standard is:

- A** in place
- B** working towards
- C** not in place

Tick the A, B or C box as appropriate.

Standard 1

Policy

The organisation has a written child safeguarding policy, approved by the relevant management body, to which all personnel and associates are required to adhere.

A

B

C

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other Conventions and Guidelines pertaining to children informs the policy of the organisation.

A

B

C

The policy is written in a way that is clear, easily understandable and it is publicised, promoted and distributed widely to all relevant stakeholders, including children.

A

B

C

The policy is clear that all children have equal rights to protection and that some children face particular risks and difficulties in getting help, because of their ethnicity, gender, age, religion or disability, sexual orientation.

A

B

C

The policy addresses safeguarding children from harm through misconduct by staff, associates and others, from poor practice and from its operational activities where these may harm children or put them at risk due to poor design and/or delivery, for example.

A

B

C

The organisation makes clear that ultimate responsibility for ensuring the safety of children rests at the most senior levels.

A

B

C

Standard 2

People

The organisation has a written child safeguarding policy, approved by the relevant management body, to which all personnel and associates (including partners) are required to adhere.

A

B

C

Recruitment processes have strong child safeguarding checks in place. Recruitment adverts, interviews and contracts all outline a commitment to child safeguarding.

A

B

C

The organisation is open and aware when it comes to child safeguarding matters such that issues can be easily identified, raised and discussed. All personnel and associates have training on child safeguarding.

A

B

C

Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse, provided with advice and support on keeping themselves safe including information for children, parents/carers about where to go for help.

A

B

C

The organisation designates key people at different levels (including the most senior level) as “focal points” with clear defined responsibilities, to champion, support and communicate on child safeguarding and for effective operation of the child safeguarding policy.

A

B

C

Partner organisations are required and supported to develop minimum child safeguarding measures appropriate to their organisation.

A

B

C

Standard 3

Procedures

The organisation requires local mapping exercises to be carried out that analyse the legal, social welfare and child protection arrangements in the context in which it works.

A

B

C

There is an appropriate process for reporting and responding to child protection incidents and concerns that fits with the local systems for dealing with incidents of child abuse (as identified in the mapping).

A

B

C

The identification and mitigation of child safeguarding risk is incorporated into risk assessment processes at all levels, i.e. from identification of corporate risks through to planning an activity involving or impacting on children.

A

B

C

Adequate human and financial resources are made available to support development and implementation of child safeguarding measures.

A

B

C

There are clear procedures in place that provide step-by-step guidance on how to report safely which are linked to the organisations disciplinary policy and procedures.

A

B

C

Child safeguards are integrated with and actively managed into existing business processes and systems (strategic planning, budgeting, recruitment, programme cycle management, procurement, etc.) to ensure safeguarding children is a feature of all key aspects of operations.

A

B

C

Standard 4

Accountability

Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with and implementation of child safeguarding policies and procedures through specific measures and/or integration into existing systems for quality assurance, risk management, audit, monitoring and review.

A

B

C

There is a system of regular reporting to key management forums, including at the most senior level, to track progress and performance on child safeguarding, including information on safeguarding issues and child protection cases.

A

B

C

External or independent bodies are used to monitor performance in this area and hold senior leadership to account in relation to child safeguarding.

A

B

C

Opportunities exist for learning from practical case experience to be fed back into organisational development.

A

B

C

Policies and practices are reviewed at regular intervals and formally evaluated every three years.

A

B

C

Progress, performance and lessons learnt are reported to key stakeholders (management forums and external or independent bodies where relevant) and included in organisations' annual reports.

A

B

C

Risk assessment and risk mitigation

Risk and how to avoid risk are now a major part of many organisations' working strategy. The more we talk about and recognise risk, the more we can think about preventing it.

Risk assessments are key for understanding where gaps and weaknesses exist, and for measuring how effectively safeguarding policies are being implemented. The following chart provides an example of a completed risk assessment.

Definition of Risk Significance levels

High – Highly likely to happen and significant impact on child.

Medium – Either highly likely to happen or significant impact on child.

Low – Less likely to happen and less of an impact on child.

Areas of risk	Risk Factors	Risk significance	Mitigating strategy	Actions to implement
Content, scope and setting	Programmes located in areas where child abuse is prevalent.	Medium	Systems and processes (revise current processes to include background research on programme area).	Conduct research on nature and scope of child abuse in programme areas.
	Organisation has not conducted situation assessment to understand context.	High	Systems and processes (revise current project cycle to include safety).	Integrate safety into situation analyses conducted for programmes and projects, design projects and programmes with safety in mind.
Contact with children	Levels of contact with children are high in the programmes and often with one staff only.	Medium	Roles and responsibilities (change to existing role or addition of new staff).	Assign additional member of staff to meet with children on a regular basis.
	No way of getting feedback from the children and community.	Medium	Organisational culture (strengthen culture of openness).	Include responsibility to seek feedback in project staff roles.
			Roles and responsibilities (change to existing roles, assign more time in workload).	
Staff	Informal process for recruiting staff, no reference checks.	High	Policies and procedures (change existing policies/procedures).	Revise recruitment policy and procedures. Ensure references.
			Capacity Building.	Train HR/management. Assign focal point responsibilities.
	Policy and procedures not written down, or implemented, so staff do not understand responsibilities.	High	Roles and responsibilities (change existing roles or add new ones).	
			Policies and procedures.	Write policy. Develop implementation plan.
	Lack of induction/training so staff are not aware, trained or supervised on issues on child safeguarding and reporting procedures.	High	Capacity building. Mitigating strategy.	Develop and implement capacity building plan for staff.
Partners	No partnership agreements.	High	Systems and processes (change to current partnership arrangements).	Introduce partnership agreements which include child safeguarding measures.

Areas of risk	Risk Factors	Risk significance	Mitigating strategy	Actions to implement
Partners	Partner risk assessment includes finance but not child safeguarding.	High	As above (see previous page).	As above (see previous page).
	Partner is small organisation without resources to implement child safeguarding measures.	Medium	As above (see previous page).	Include funding for child safeguarding in partnership agreement.
	Activities with children not managed or supervised properly.	High	Policies and procedures (additional procedures).	Develop and implement guidelines for supervising children.
	Project is located in isolated place and away from the community.	High	Systems and processes (change to implementation stage in project cycle).	Design alternative project location with children and community.
	No ICT policy, office computers infrequently checked.	Medium	Policies and procedures.	Develop ICT policy.
		Medium	Systems and processes.	Conduct regular checks on use of office computers and laptops.
	No permission sought for images or stories.	Medium	Policies and procedures.	Introduce communications/fundraising guidance on child safeguarding.
			Systems and processes.	Introduce permission mechanisms for stories and images.

Next Steps

After completing the self-audit and risk assessment, organisations seeking to improve their child safeguarding standards are able to do so through the creation and implementation of a context-specific toolkit for UN entities.

These 5 steps combined provide robust and holistic methods for ensuring child safeguarding standards are raised, implemented and complied with across and organisation.

#1 Full assessment

The first step is for an organisation to work with the KCS-UoR project team to undertake a full assessment of current risks, standards, policies, procedures, and other key factors for safeguarding children. This will identify areas of best practice and strengths within the organisation, as well as those areas that require addressing or improving.

The assessment provides the organisation and project team with the information required to undertake co-production of policies and training.

#2 Legal mapping

A core component of safeguarding children in peacekeeping contexts is to ensure that all safeguarding complies with international, national, and local laws. The legal complexities involved with UN peacekeeping operations results in different laws applying to different people in different situations.

At the heart of the toolkit is the need for UN entities to uphold and apply international laws protecting children from harm. In order to co-produce context-specific child safeguarding policies, the project team provides legal

mapping of (a) international laws relating to children that apply to UN entities, (b) local laws and practices relating to children, (c) UN policies pertaining to child safeguarding and to the conduct of personnel, (d) national and military laws of TCCs involved with the peacekeeping operation.

#3 Co-production of safeguarding measures

Co-production of measures involves the UN entity and the project team working together to design policies that uphold the laws and policies identified in the legal mapping, understand the local context including key risks and identifying key institutions and local actors, and that provide streamlined and effective safeguarding across the entity's work.

#4 Training

In line with the needs identified in the assessment, training is provided by the project team, including specialist child safeguarding experts. Those sessions are run within the UN entity for key staff or all staff depending on the organisation's size and needs. Training sessions are based on international child safeguarding standards and procedures, and focus on understanding and implementing the co-produced policies.

#5 Follow-Up

The project team provides ongoing follow-up and support after the training sessions, with annual reviews where required.

ADDITIONALLY, KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE CAN FURTHER PROVIDE CERTIFICATION FOR ORGANISATIONS WHERE REQUIRED AND REQUESTED.

www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk

- <https://research.reading.ac.uk/peace-keeper-or-perpetrator/>
- <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>
- <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/about-us/news/special-report-urges-international-action-end-abuse-children-context-un-peacekeeping>