Why is this important?

The United Nations Security Council is charged with maintaining international peace and security. Over the years the Council has come to interpret what constitutes a threat to peace and security more broadly to also include issues which are closely relevant to UNICEF. These issues form an important dimension of UNICEF’s mandate to protect civilians from the impact of conflict – particularly women and children.

Three thematic areas form the core of this mandate:

1. Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC);
2. Women, Peace and Security (WPS); and
3. Protection of Civilians (PoC).

The area of Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) in particular has been important for the Security Council. Starting with Resolution 1261 in 1999, the Council has adopted a series of resolutions to strengthen efforts to end and prevent grave child rights violations and bring parties to conflict into compliance with international child rights standards. Resolution 1612 (2005) was a significant advancement for the agenda, under which the Secretary-General was requested to establish a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). The MRM was designed to monitor and report on grave violations of children’s rights in situations of conflict, placing child protection at the heart of the international peace and security agenda.

The Special Representative to the Secretary-General on CAAC plays an important role in overseeing the global CAAC agenda. The office is tasked with protecting the rights of children affected by armed conflict through advocacy, awareness raising, coordination, and the provision of technical support.

What are Representatives’ accountabilities related to the CAAC agenda?

As the lead agency for protection of children’s rights, UNICEF is a key partner in the implementation of the MRM and plays a central role in the CAAC agenda. This note highlights several key functions within the MRM that UNICEF plays, as outlined below. Within those functions, the Representative has specific accountabilities in terms of coordinating the work of the MRM, preparing and clearing products related to the CAAC agenda, and establishing a response for affected children.

What are the key elements?

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Children and Armed Conflict collects timely, objective, and reliable information on grave violations against children in armed conflict in specific countries. It provides relevant information to the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (SCWG), facilitates analysis and information sharing among relevant actors, triggers responses at the appropriate level, and seeks to inform policy and programmes that protect children.

The MRM focuses on the monitoring and reporting of six grave violations:

1. The killing and maiming of children;
2. Recruitment and the use of children by parties to conflict;
3. Rape or other grave sexual violence against children;
4. Abduction of children;
5. Attacks against schools or hospitals; and
6. The denial of humanitarian access for children.

For detailed and precise guidance on the roles and responsibilities of UNCEF, including Representatives, in the CAAC agenda in both MRM and non-MRM countries, please see GUIDANCE NOTE: UNICEF Roles and Responsibilities in the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda of the Security Council (November 2015).
Some Components of the MRM

- **Listing**: parties to conflict that commit acts of killing and maiming of children, the recruitment and use of children, rape or other sexual violence against children, abduction of children, and/or attacks on schools and hospitals are listed or named in the Secretary-General’s annual report on CAAC. Once a party has been listed, an MRM must be established for the country in which the party operates, monitoring and reporting on violations by all parties in that context.

- **Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMRs)**: in each instance where the MRM is activated, a CTFMR is established to oversee the mechanism, consisting of the UN Mission (where applicable), UN agencies, and relevant NGOs. The Task Force is co-chaired by UNICEF and the highest UN representative in the country – normally an SRSG, a Resident Coordinator, or Humanitarian Coordinator. The CTFMR sends its reports to the SRSG CAAC, and its findings provide inputs into the Secretary-General’s annual report on CAAC and separate country reports of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict.

- **Action Plans**: are time-bound commitments signed by the UN and the parties listed for grave violations. Action Plans are designed to hold parties to account by providing a tool to monitor progress against.

Roles of the Representative

- **Co-chairing the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting**: Following the listing of at least one party to conflict in the country, the UNICEF Representative with the SRSG or RC will establish the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR). The Representative co-chairs the principal level meetings of the CTFMR.

- **Risk management**: At the onset of the MRM, the Representative, as co-chair of the CTFMR, should play a lead role in organizing a risk assessment regarding the operation of the MRM and in the preparation of a strategy for risk mitigation. Periodic updates of the risks and the risk mitigation strategy will need to be undertaken to account for changes in the operational environment. Programme criticality exercises in situations of high or very high residual security risk should take consideration of MRM activities.

- **Support the Operation of the MRM**: UNICEF staff in the COs have specific roles in the monitoring grave violations, information management, capacity development of partner organizations, programming, and advocacy. In collaboration with the RO and HQ, the Representative has a role to make sure UNICEF is playing these roles effectively through recruitment of specialized staff and raising resources.

- **Formal reporting**: As CTFMR co-chair, UNICEF contributes to and often leads the in-country drafting of three types of reports, submitting inputs through the RC/SRSG to the OSRSG-CAAC:
  - SG’s annual report to the Security Council on CAAC;
  - SG’s country-specific reports to the Security Council on CAAC;
  - Quarterly reports to the Security Council Working Group on CAAC, called Global Horizontal Notes.

Submissions for each of these reports must be cleared by the UNICEF Representative and the other CTFMR co-chair.

- The CTFMR co-chairs are responsible for entering into dialogue with listed parties to conflict (which may be state or non-state entities) in order to negotiate, develop and implement time-bound Action Plan(s), with clear benchmarks, to end and prevent the violations against children for which they are listed. The CTFMR negotiates Action Plans drawing on the conditions set out in standard templates and with the support of UNICEF HQ and the OSRSG-CAAC.

Within the Action Plan, UNICEF often has specific responsibilities by itself or as part of the CTFMR, particularly for supporting programme response for children but also for monitoring the implementation and compliance of the party.

UNICEF is either a signatory to Action Plans or, in certain high political risk situations, signs as a witness. Any assumption of responsibility as signatory or witness should be considered carefully in consultation with EMOPS and PD at UNICEF HQ.

**Resources**

**GUIDANCE NOTE: UNICEF Roles and Responsibilities in the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda of the Security Council**

- **MRM Field Manual and Tools**

For more information please contact: Laura Perez, Humanitarian Policy and Advocacy Specialist, EMOPS