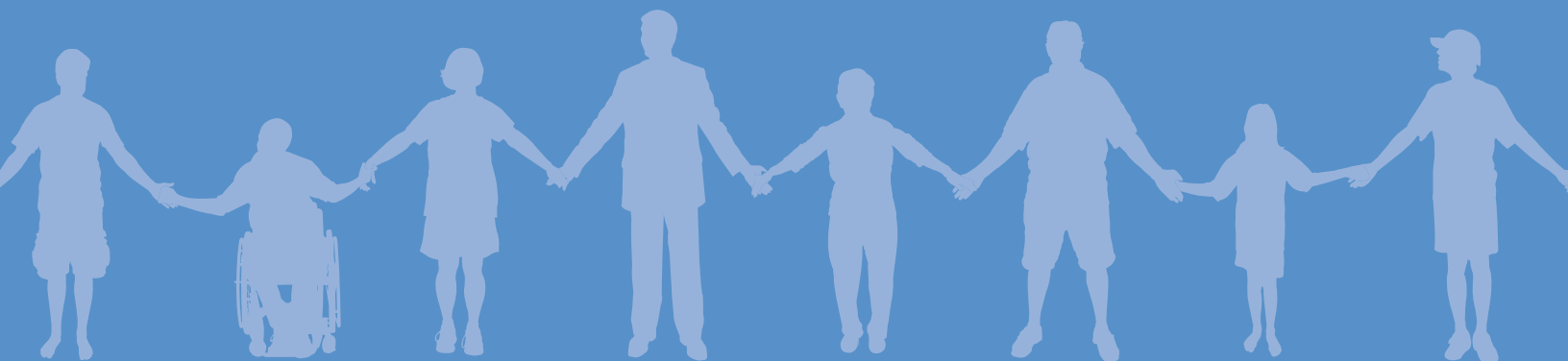


CHILDREN, PEACE AND SECURITY

A POLICY CHECKLIST ON BUILDING THE AGENDA TOGETHER

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WHAT THIS IS

A policy checklist on what governments and leaders need to understand about a Children, Peace and Security (CPS) agenda and how it relates to the broader global peace and security agenda.

INTRODUCTION

There is an urgent need to advance understanding about the fragile contexts that threaten children, increase their vulnerability to extreme violence and insecurity, and diminish their agency to positively impact change. These challenges perpetuate cycles of inequality and violence that continue over generations. Creating a global (CPS) agenda is a response to address these challenges and complement existing frameworks, including: the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda; the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda;

Early Warning and Genocide Prevention Networks; and Human Security, Security Sector Reform and Economic Security Frameworks. These policy frameworks are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Preventing children's involvement in and exposure to armed violence, coupled with concerted efforts to work directly with children and youth to build and sustain peace, must become fully integrated in global peace and security efforts.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this CPS Policy Checklist is to introduce the need for a global CPS agenda. The policy checklist aims to provide guidance to governments on tangible actions that can be taken to implement and contribute to a CPS agenda. The Policy Checklist is a living document that will continue to evolve and incorporate best practices. The recommendations below are not exhaustive but a catalyst to create dialogue and action in building a CPS agenda.

As the co-creators, with the Government of Canada, of the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, and its Implementation Guidance aimed at security sector institutions, this checklist was developed to provide a holistic prevention approach from a government policy perspective. Additionally, it should be viewed as complementary to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children and Armed Conflict, the Safe Schools Declaration, the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, and key regional charters on children.

Despite the increasing development of children's rights treaties and standards, including dozens of UN Security Council Resolutions, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and numerous mandates of relevant Special Representatives and Special Advisors to the UN Secretary-General, gaps exist in the constellation of global policy with respect to prioritising the prevention of recruitment and use of children in armed violence, and the direct link to achieving peace and security. While the YPS and WPS agendas are commendable, neither specifically address the unique challenges that children face nor do they recognize how children are central to achieving peace and security. An effective CPS agenda must address these gaps, as well as their intersectionality, as it complements existing policy; specifically, by the work of government ministries and agencies.

CHECKLIST

1. INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT

The CPS agenda is in the process of being built and defined and a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution is key to ensuring there is international agreement on what the CPS agenda should look like. UNSC Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015) helped solidify the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Youth, Peace and Security agenda respectively. UNSC resolutions are important because they are a formal expression of will or opinion of Security Council members and can help to set future actions.

Agreement can also be achieved at regional levels, via statements from regional bodies.

States should:

- Support the development of a UNSC Resolution on CPS;
- Support regional bodies to develop region-specific statements on the CPS agenda.

2. NATIONAL CPS ACTION PLANS (GOVERNMENT MANDATES)

To uphold their CPS obligations, government ministries must have clear mandates which set out their roles and responsibilities. Children's security must be seen as part of the broader security agenda and governments must ensure that their messaging reflects how the CPS agenda is linked to other security issues. Similar to the Gender-Based Analysis Plus approach which assesses systemic inequalities and how to develop more gender inclusive policymaking, there should be a similar approach for the CPS agenda which assesses systemic and intersectional inequalities in relation to age.

States should:

- Appoint a governmental children's rights focal point (i.e. a Children's Ombudsperson);
- Ensure there are clear mandates across appropriate government ministries which set out how they are responsible for upholding the CPS agenda;
- Look at what needs to be added to the Gender-Based Analysis Plus approach to include a CPS agenda.



3. INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGAL STANDARDS

Ensuring there is a strong foundation of children's rights policies is an essential starting point to prevent children's involvement in armed violence and promote their meaningful participation in peace efforts. There is a rich framework of global and regional children's rights treaties and standards, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children and Armed Conflict, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Vancouver Principles, Paris Principles and Commitments, and the Safe Schools Declaration. In addition to adhering to these instruments, States must also work with domestic, regional, and global partners to implement and uphold children's rights at the national level.

States should:

- Ratify or endorse key children's rights treaties and standards and encourage other States to do so;
- Amend or pass domestic legislation which aligns with international obligations, ensure proper resourcing for their practical implementation, train relevant authorities on their duties under each obligation, ensure regular monitoring and reporting of implementation, and co-operate with others to assist or receive implementation assistance;
- Use the Dallaire Institute's Policy Alignment Tool to assess their implementation of key children's rights treaties and standards, identify gaps and develop recommendations on how to better uphold their obligations;
- Ensure children have access to justice when their rights are violated under national law.

4. NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY INCLUSION

Defence policy is part of a broader concept of National Security Policy or National Security Strategy. Defence policy encompasses defence planning and management, which are consecutive steps towards practical implementation of that policy, down to actual command and control.¹ Defence policy is public policy and as a result should be created with a perspective that includes children's prioritisation and protection internationally. National Security Policy must also be reviewed to include the protection and prioritisation of children from armed violence as critical to ensuring domestic peace and security. Support for the promotion of research and policy development on mental health for members of the security sector and the links to children, peace and security are key to the operational effectiveness of these institutions as well as the protection of children.

States should:

- Integrate children, peace and security considerations within national security policy, direction, and guidance as it applies to the development, planning and execution of military and police operations and activities across the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of armed conflict and violence;²
- Revise national security and defence policies to include specific reference and provisions on the prioritisation of children's protection in national policy, doctrine, and directives to provide institutional guidance, including on training and education standards and resources, on the role of the security sector, consistent with the Vancouver Principles and other child protection standards;
- Support the development of institutional roles and responsibilities of child protection units, through the establishment of child protection focal points within Ministries of Defence and National Security Institutions.

¹ Refer to DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance <https://www.dcaf.ch/resources?type=publications>.

² JSP 985 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040257/20211209_JSP_985_Vol_1.pdf

5. FOREIGN POLICY INCLUSION

Foreign policy should be inclusive of a diversity of perspectives that allows for the inclusion and participation of many viewpoints in dialogue and decision-making processes. Increased inclusion and participation of diverse voices must be underpinned by the transformation of traditional processes and institutions, to allow for an expanded understanding of peace and security, extending beyond the operations of police and militaries and the narrow focus on state-level security, to include a prioritisation of human security, violence prevention and peacebuilding. Foreign policy can be a mechanism for global peace and security, yet effective and sustainable global peace and security is not possible without the protection of children, their rights, and their freedoms.

A CPS focused foreign policy is a political framework based on the notion that children are at the heart of global peace and security. By prioritising children's needs, states can begin to address the root causes of children's vulnerability to violence and insecurity, prevent

their recruitment and use in armed violence, and strengthen their agency to positively impact change. A CPS approach promotes coordination and collaboration across humanitarian, development and peace sectors and partners – fostering a “triple nexus” – to improve flexibility, responsiveness, and sustainability of interventions.

States should:

- Ensure that child-centred indicators, early warning indicators and children's perspectives are being prioritised and included in the design of new foreign policies;
- Ensure that senior leadership in foreign affairs is educated on the CPS agenda and that foreign policy instruments such as diplomacy, technical assistance and development assistance are used to uphold, implement and strengthen a CPS agenda;
- View foreign policies that include a focus on CPS as strategically complementary to existing policy frameworks like WPS and YPS, among others.

6. RESOURCES

Often one of the most persistent obstacles to proper implementation of any agenda is the lack of financial resources - agendas cannot be built and sustained without adequate financing. Allocating proper resources is essential to upholding a CPS agenda. Governments must ensure that appropriate ministries have the financial means and human resources to implement their obligations.

States should:

- Set financial targets for CPS agenda resourcing, considering targets set for other marginalised agendas (i.e. the UN has a

target of allocating 15% of peacebuilding funds to projects addressing women's needs and advancing gender equality³);

- Develop financial tracking systems which promote transparency and learning by detailing spending and the impact of such funding;
- Ensure availability of long-term and flexible funding to civil society organisations working on CPS;
- Support the inclusion of children's perspectives and needs in donor conferences.

³ See <https://wps.unwomen.org/financing/> and <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/fund>.

7. CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE

According to UNICEF, an estimated 800 million children live in fragile and conflict-affected areas and 1 in 10 live in extremely fragile contexts⁴. Despite these alarmingly high figures, children are often not involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and their potential as peacemakers is under appreciated. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out children's rights to be involved in matters which affect them, and encourages meaningful participation for sustainable peace. States must harness children's potential by involving their perspectives and prioritisation in building and upholding the CPS agenda, including involving their perspectives in peace processes. Youths should be empowered as key advocates who can articulate the perspectives of children and give voice to their protection.

States should:

- Support the development of platforms that prioritise the perspectives of children, including their experiences, and allow for collaboration with peers and youth leaders to work together for peace and human rights;
- Provide financial resources to support initiatives that prioritise the perspectives of children and the inclusion of children in peace processes;
- Invest in education that includes critical thinking, mediation, communication, and working with others;
- Support education and advocacy campaigns to encourage adults to understand the perspectives of children and their views on peace and security as a priority.

8. INTERSECTIONALITY

The way in which children experience conflict can vary depending on factors such as gender identity or expression, abilities, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, age, socioeconomic background, and other forms of exclusion and marginalisation. Children are defined as those under the age of 18, but there are many different identities and experiences that also affect the varying challenges they face. An intersectional approach will help us better identify, understand, and respond to how different layers of identity overlap and create multiple levels of injustice and child rights violations, as well as build protective factors. These intersecting layers can also add to the potential to contribute to change.

States should:

- Explore Gender-Based Analysis Plus to assess how girls, boys and gender-diverse children may experience law, policy and practice;
- Ensure that the diversity of children's experiences in conflict, which can vary depending on factors such as gender, race, abilities, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic background, and other forms of exclusion and marginalisation, are factored into the development of law, policy and practice.



⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/stories/fast-facts-water-sanitation-hygiene-conflict>

9. IDENTIFYING AND FILLING IN THE GAPS

Gaps exist in current global policy with respect to prioritising the prevention of recruitment and use of children in armed violence. Some of the gaps include: understanding the connections between forced child labour and violence prevention; gender equality and empowerment, gender minorities and concepts of masculinity; the responsibility to protect (R2P); the connections between children's socioeconomic security, and/or discrimination, and child governance/ Children's Rights Upfront; and climate change. As the world changes and new threats to children's peace and security become apparent,

these gaps may also change, and States must have their pulse on what emerging research needs are.

States should:

- Work with civil society and academic partners to better understand these gaps and how to address them;
- Allocate funding from their CPS budget towards research that clarifies these gaps and provides action-oriented recommendations.

10. IMPACT

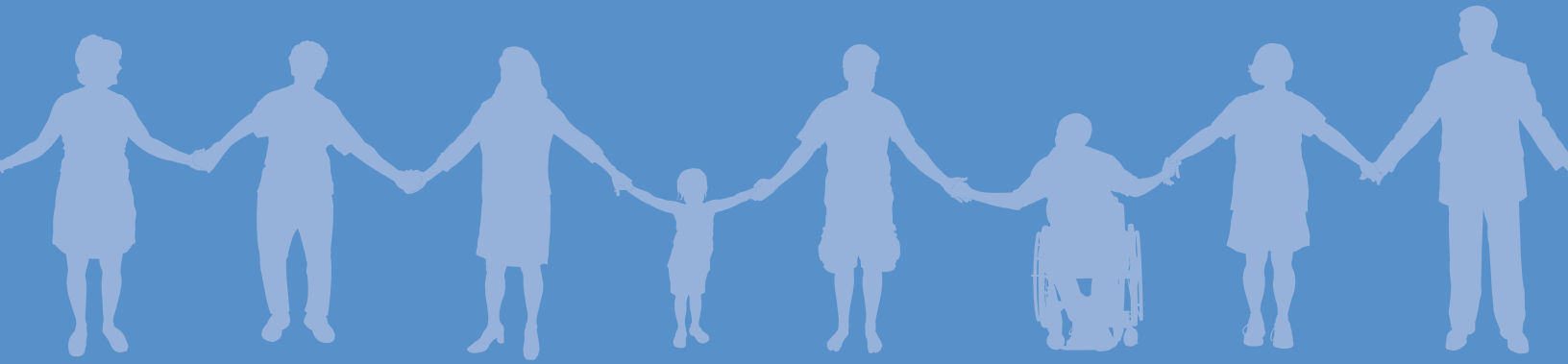
To measure the impact of a global CPS agenda, an effective monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning process must be developed. These tools and processes should be designed to objectively and systematically assess ongoing policy developments, and to include and share lessons learned and best practices, as well as other recommendations.

States should:

- Encourage countries to allocate resources within their National Action Plans to ensure effective sharing of best practices, lessons learned and recommendations at regional and international levels;
- Work together to create a global advocacy approach to disseminate and publish achievements and challenges to the CPS agenda;
- Mandate child protection units created within the National Ministries of Defence to actively contribute to the best practices, lessons learned and advocacy strategies.

“SIMPLY PUT, AGE IS NOT WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO AROUND. IT IS IDEAS. AND TO PROTECT THE YOUTH AND TO PROTECT CHILDREN IS TO PROTECT IDEAS AND TO PROTECT THE FUTURE.”

- MYRAH OLOO
(YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
DALLAIRE INSTITUTE'S INTERNATIONAL
ADVISORY COUNCIL)



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