



Report of the Addis Ababa workshop on strengthening the role of armed forces in the protection of education from attack and educational institutions from military use during armed conflict in Africa



Participants in the Addis Ababa workshop on strengthening the role of armed forces in the protection of education from attack and educational institutions from military use during armed conflict in Africa

Summary

From November 8-9, 2016, Norway, Sierra Leone, Zambia, and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)¹, with the support of the Save the Children Pan-African and African Union Liaison Office, hosted a workshop focused on the implementation of the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#) (the Guidelines)². Representatives from ministries of defense and education and the national armed forces of 14 of the 17 African states that have already endorsed the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) (the Declaration), as well

¹ The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) was established in 2010 by organizations working in the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected contexts, higher education, protection, international human rights and humanitarian law who were concerned about ongoing attacks on educational institutions, their students and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity. GCPEA is an international coalition of organizations that includes: CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics), Human Rights Watch, Institute of International Education/IIE Scholar Rescue Fund, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Save the Children, Scholars at Risk Network, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNHCR. This report is independent of the individual member organizations of the Steering Committee of GCPEA and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Steering Committee member organizations.

² The [Guidelines](#) and the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) and other resources on military use of schools can be found on GCPEA's website at <http://protectingeducation.org/draft-lucens-guidelines-protecting-schools-and-universities-military-use-during-armed-conflict>, and other GCPEA resources can be found at <http://protectingeducation.org/resources>.

as regional and international peacekeeping and education experts, met to exchange practices and experiences on protecting educational facilities during armed conflict.

The workshop discussed the situations in a number of states directly affected by armed conflict where attacks on students, teachers, and schools have occurred. Participants also considered several states, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, which have policies aimed at preventing the use of schools and universities for military purposes.

This forum allowed state representatives to discuss how governments can meet the commitments in the Safe Schools Declaration and bring the *Guidelines* into relevant domestic legislation, policies, and operational frameworks. Presentations from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the African Union (AU) demonstrated how different stakeholders can work together to protect schools from attack and prevent their use for military purposes.

The workshop also featured the testing of a draft toolkit on understanding and implementing the *Guidelines*, which is being developed through a partnership between GCPEA and the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative. This toolkit contains guidance and sample instruments to help states strengthen trainings and practices on the protection of educational facilities from military use and attack. The workshop participants provided feedback on the current draft and offered suggestions for inclusion. The toolkit will be launched in 2017 following testing by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and further consultations.

The implementation of measures discussed during the workshop will be showcased at the Second International Safe Schools Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in March 2017.

Introduction

H.E. Mr. Andreas Gaarder, Ambassador at the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Addis Ababa, as co-host of the workshop, recognized education as a human right and a prerequisite for development, and emphasized how important it is that children and young people feel safe in the classroom. Unfortunately, in countries affected by war, going to school can be one of the most dangerous things for a child to do. Schools and universities have increasingly become targets of violent attacks, including because many are used for military purposes.

He underlined Norway's promotion of the Safe School Declaration as part of a broad emphasis on education for development, including education in emergencies and protracted crises. The Declaration is a non-legally binding political commitment, and the *Guidelines* do not change international law. They are comprised of a set of simple, clear, and practical actions that can help all parties to conflict exercise restraint with respect to the military use of educational facilities, or mitigate the impact on students when military use occurs.

Ambassador Gaarder drew attention to Argentina hosting the second Safe Schools Conference in Buenos Aires on 28-29 March 2017. This global event is an opportunity to take stock of implementation and to bring more countries onboard. He expressed the hope that the states at the workshop will be present in Argentina, to further share strong examples of how endorsement of the Declaration and implementation of the *Guidelines* can have a meaningful impact on the safety of schools in situations of armed conflict. Ambassador Gaarder encouraged the endorsing states of the African Union to offer a leading example to other regions of the world.

The scale and impact of attacks on educational facilities in Africa and the Safe Schools Declaration
Mr. Muki M. Benas Phiri, First Secretary, Legal, Embassy of the Republic of Zambia, Addis Ababa

More than 28.5 million children worldwide were out of school due to conflict in 2013, according to UNESCO. Of these, 12.6 million are from Sub Saharan Africa and 55% of those affected are girls. The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental commitment, aimed at making schools safer in conflict zones. It was opened for endorsement at an international conference in Oslo, Norway, on 29 May 2015. As of October 2016, 56 countries had endorsed the Declaration, including 17 African Union states. These were Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, and Zambia.

The Safe Schools Declaration describes the immediate and long-term consequences of attacks on students, teachers, schools, and universities, and the military use of schools and universities. It contrasts this with the positive and protective role that education can have during armed conflict, highlighting the importance of key mechanisms, instruments, and initiatives that contribute to protecting education from attack, in particular relevant Security Council resolutions, the UN monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children, and the *Guidelines*.

The *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* constitute a non-binding practical tool that help parties to conflict exercise restraint with respect to the use of schools and universities for military purposes. This helps countries better safeguard the civilian character of such facilities. The *Guidelines* draw on existing good practice found in national legislation, military doctrine, military trainings, jurisprudence, as well as government policies in a number of countries. They are intended for states that are ready to take extra steps to better protect schools, students, and teachers in times of armed conflict.

Case Study: Democratic Republic of the Congo

A Ministry of Defense Directive in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Minister of Defense Alexandre Luba Ntambo, Ministerial Directive on the Implementation of the Action Plan, Ministry of Defense, No. VPM/MDNAC/CAP/0909/2013, May 2, 2013*) states that all members of the Congolese army found guilty of attacks on schools, requisition of schools for military purposes, or destruction of school facilities will face severe criminal and disciplinary sanctions.

The Declaration contains other commitments to strengthen the prevention of, and response to, attacks on education. This includes improving reporting of attacks; collecting reliable data on attacks and military use of schools and universities; aiding victims of attacks; investigating allegations of violations of national and international law and prosecuting perpetrators where appropriate; and developing and promoting conflict sensitive approaches to education.

Further commitments include seeking to continue education during armed conflict, restoring access to education faster after attacks, and supporting the UN children and armed conflict agenda. Lastly, the Declaration is a framework for collaboration and exchange, as endorsing states agree to meet on a regular basis to review implementation of the Declaration and use of the *Guidelines*.

The scale and impact of military use of schools and the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*

Mr. Michael Yaw Lumor, Advocacy Advisor, Save the Children Pan Africa and AU Liaison Office

Military use of schools includes use of an education institution as a base, barrack, training facility, weapons or ammunition cache, firing position, observation point, detention or interrogation center, and location of illegal recruitment of children into armed groups. Such use of schools is a global

problem, documented in at least 26 countries with armed conflict between 2005 and 2015, including 11 countries in Africa.

The negative consequences of military use of schools include the potential transformation of the schools into a legitimate military target for opposition forces, and students and teachers have been killed in the resulting attacks. Vital educational infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, with a long-term impact on recovery. Students and teachers are at risk of abuse by undisciplined soldiers or fighters. Girls have been harassed and raped, and in some cases students and teachers have been forced to work for the armed actors. Even once a school has been evacuated, students and teachers may still be at risk, particularly if unexploded ordnance or explosive remnants have been left behind.

The impact on education delivery can be dramatic. Students may stop going to school because they are unwilling or unable to do so. Enrollment is often reduced and fewer students graduate to higher levels of education. Girl students are particularly affected, as parents are often reluctant to allow their daughters to attend school alongside armed groups or forces.

Countries that join the Safe Schools Declaration agree to use and, as far as possible and appropriate, bring into domestic policy and operational frameworks, the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, which urge parties to armed conflict to not use schools in support of their military effort, and endeavor to avoid impinging on students' safety and education.

Case Study: Sudan

A 2002 agreement between Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (*Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement to protect non-combatant civilians and civilian facilities from military attack, 2002, art. 1*) includes a commitment to "refrain from endangering the safety of civilians by intentionally using them as 'human shields' or by using ... schools to shield otherwise lawful military targets."

It is important to note that the *Guidelines* are not legally binding in themselves and they do not affect existing obligations under international law. Countries are encouraged to adopt them in the spirit in which they were promulgated, and to adapt them in practice to suit their specific circumstances. The *Guidelines* are based on what is practically achievable. They acknowledge that parties to armed conflict are invariably faced with difficult dilemmas requiring pragmatic solutions. The *Guidelines* were developed with advice from experts from ministries of defense and armed forces from around the world—as well as from ministries of education and foreign affairs. The *Guidelines* reflect evidence of good practice already applied by some armed forces, and have been produced for both national armed forces and non-state armed groups. Although produced specifically for armed conflict, they may also be useful for post-conflict situations and other comparable situations.

Case Study: South Sudan

In South Sudan, by Order of the Army Chief of Staff (*Lt. Gen. Thomas Cirillo Swaka, Acting Sudan People's Liberation Army Chief of Staff, 557/9/2014, September 10, 2014*), all soldiers are prohibited from occupying or using schools in any manner. Anyone who violates the directives is subject to the full range of disciplinary and administrative measures available under South Sudanese and international law.

Protection of educational facilities from attack: prevention and response – Nigeria’s experiences

Ms. Maria Idenyi Mark, Director of Education, Ministry of Defense, Nigeria

Ms. Mark highlighted the abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls from a school in Chibok in Nigeria’s Borno state by Boko Haram on 14 April, 2014, as a significant example of an attack on education. This incident underlined the urgent need to prevent and respond to attacks on educational facilities in Nigeria. Schools in eight states are currently vulnerable to attack: Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Kano, Nassarawa, Benue, and Gombe. Nigeria’s government recently established a presidential committee, chaired by General Theophilus Danjuma, to improve safety and security in the region.

The scale of Boko Haram attacks since 2009 necessitated the establishment in 2014 of the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI), a development assistance package partnering UNICEF, the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Ministry of Education, which complements security measures carried out by the military. The assistance is drawn from federal funds, international assistance, and private sector contributions. The SSI has two main objectives: preventing interruptions to the school calendar and educational programs; and providing a secure environment in which children can learn.

Case Study: Nigeria

As part of the SSI, a student transfer program has been developed, focused on the most affected states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. The federal Ministries of Education and Finance, the National Emergency Management Agency, and state-level authorities work together to relocate students and teachers from high-risk zones to secondary schools in safe zones. The pilot phase of the program saw 2,400 students (800 from each state) transferred to 43 Federal Unity Colleges across the north of the country. The program is in its third year of implementation. As of July 2016, 2,260 students were participating in the program.

As part of the SSI a program was also established to upgrade school infrastructure, provide physical protection measures (such as fencing, alarm systems, guards, and community-based policing), develop school safety plans and rapid response systems, and train staff members to be school safety officers. Implementation of the program has been hampered by a lack of financial resources, however. Other interventions carried out by the State Ministries of Education include needs assessments of internally displaced children, enrolment drives targeting out-of-school children, temporary learning spaces, and training teachers to accommodate the education needs of displaced students.

Ms. Mark’s presentation focused on defense schools, which cater to the children of those serving in the Nigerian armed forces, and which are located within military barracks. Children of the civilian population are also admitted. Ms. Mark is responsible for supervision of these schools.

Case Study: Nigeria

Nigeria implements several measures to enhance school security, such as: constructing ditches around school perimeter fences; installing security lighting throughout school compounds; using sand bags to deter intruders; deploying armed military personnel to carry out vehicular and foot patrols; stationing security personnel at school gates; and setting up roadblocks on access roads.

The provision of these measures involves cooperation between military personnel and other security agencies, such as the police, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, and the Department of State Security Services. Acknowledging that the presence of military personnel could disturb children, roadblocks are positioned in the area surrounding schools rather than within school compounds.

A handbook for emergency preparedness response for learners at the junior secondary school level has been developed. Similar support and resources are provided to children in camps for displaced people by the Education in Emergency Working Group, of which the Federal Ministry of Education, the Universal Basic Education Committee, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Defense are all members.

Case Study: Nigeria

Nigeria employs several communications measures to improve school security: phone numbers of key staff members are displayed and distributed; schools provide walkie-talkie radios to key staff to facilitate prompt communication; and the government is installing closed-circuit cameras to monitor people moving in and around schools. Students and staff are provided with personal security training to equip them with the skills to respond to a kidnapping attempt, suspicious objects on school grounds, or the impact of a bomb or arson attack on the school.

Ms. Mark emphasized the severe threat that insecurity poses to learning, and the need for increased investment in security for schools. She called for the comprehensive implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and *Guidelines*, with support from NGOs and international organizations.

Protection of educational facilities from attack: prevention and response – Somalia’s experience

Mr. Mohamoud Abdirahman Auke, Director General, Ministry of Defense, Somalia

The personal impact of attacks on and military use of schools was described by Mr. Auke, who shared how identity cards are now being issued to some schoolchildren in Mogadishu in order to allow them to be more easily identified in the event of an attack on their school.

Mr. Auke highlighted the impact of the presence of fighting forces in schools and universities, which often leads to students dropping out, reduced enrollment, and lower rates of transition to higher levels of education. 74% of the population of Somalia is under the age of thirty. Recognizing that children and youth are a country’s most valuable resource, Somalia endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in October 2015 as a demonstration of the government’s political commitment to eliminate the use of schools and universities as military bases. This occurred shortly following Mr. Auke’s participation in the GCPEA workshop on promising practices in protecting education from attack in Istanbul in October, 2015. Mr. Auke highlighted the fact that implementation of the *Guidelines* requires cross-ministerial cooperation, with the involvement of, at least, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Internal Security, and the Ministry of Defense.

Case Study: Somalia

In June 2016, following Somalia’s endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration, the Ministries of Internal Security and Defense cooperated to deploy security forces to exam sites in Mogadishu, allowing students to sit their final exams in safety.

Mr. Auke spoke of repeated attacks on education by Al Shabaab which aim to prevent the Somali people from obtaining an education. In one example, in December 2009, an Al Shabaab suicide bomber attacked Hotel Shamu in Mogadishu where a graduation ceremony was being held for students of Banadir University. More than 60 people were killed, including the ministers of education, higher education, and health.

The speaker also highlighted the increased risk of child recruitment by local militia when children are not able to receive an education. The Somali government is committed to continue working to educate these groups and local authorities about the dangers of involving children in conflict. The government, in partnership with international organizations, also provides rehabilitation, education, and vocational training programs for children who are rescued from child recruitment.

Faced with a situation where the rule of law and understanding of the role of government have been eroded, the government must increase awareness of the importance of education and the laws protecting children. The government is hindered in addressing some of the Declaration’s aspirational goals due to lack of capacity. However, increasing the security and safety of school systems is one piece in the puzzle of creating a strong, stable, peaceful Somalia.

Case Study: Somalia
Since endorsing the Declaration and committing to implement the *Guidelines*, Somalia’s Ministry of Defense has expanded its Child Protection Unit to a Child Protection Department, which addresses the Safe Schools agenda, as well as the issue of child soldiers.

Mr. Auke recommended that the GCPEA report on [What Ministries Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use](#) should be disseminated as widely as possible and in local languages. Mr. Auke also urged the African Union to be at the forefront of the Safe Schools agenda.

Ensuring a safe environment for educational facilities in insecure situations– Niger’s experience
Mr. Assane Hamza, Regional Director of Primary Education in Diffa Ministry of Education, Niger

Mr. Assane Hamza described the situation in Niger, where numerous attacks have been carried out by Boko Haram since February 2015. Seventy-seven schools servicing 3,783 students remain closed and not under the control of the educational authorities. There has been destruction of school materials in Bosso, and one abandoned school in Bosso, located near the Komadougou Yobe River, was used by military forces as a strategic position. School activities are regularly interrupted by insecurity, and long commutes for students and teachers along risky routes can discourage them from making the journey. The military is challenged by the complex security situation, insufficient human resources, and the actions of individuals who inform insurgents of the movements of military patrols.

Mr. Hamza outlined a variety of measures taken to make schools safer. Among the military measures are the protection of villages by a permanent military presence, which acts as a deterrent, as well as the use of military patrols. The educational authorities have mapped school locations to identify and relocate schools situated in the red zone. School administrations have implemented a daily register for students and teachers, included protective measures in school rules, and disseminated information in school newspapers. School governance and management structures – such as Committees for the Decentralized Management of Schools – have implemented checks of visitors before they enter schools; maintained contact numbers for law enforcement leaders; and acted as a mediatory body to settle conflicts between partners in the education system at the local level.

Case Study: Niger
School directors in insecure areas of Niger have the telephone number of a local military contact and can make a direct appeal for action if a threat develops. Joint education and child protection activities have been developed, with awareness-raising among teachers on protection themes, such as the recruitment of children by armed groups, family reunification, and risks linked to explosive devices. Alternative education is delivered via a radio program for children who cannot travel to school due to insecurity.

Mr. Hamza recommended that the military be trained on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the vulnerability and risks which impact children during conflict, and existing protection mechanisms. He also recommended that psychosocial support should be provided to teachers and students.

Mr. Hamza recommended that educational authorities and military forces cooperate to collect information concerning the condition of schools affected by attacks. Advocacy should be carried out at the highest level – including by UNICEF – to ensure that schools are not used for military purposes, and Mr. Hamza suggested that the capacity of military forces to protect schools should be strengthened. Finally, schools should each develop a prevention and response action plan, which should be publicly displayed on the school premises.

During the discussion, M. Berthé Nanourou, Legal Counsel, Military Operations, Ministry of Defense, Côte d'Ivoire, highlighted how his country has the aim of building a school in each village to avoid long or dangerous commutes for students and teachers.

The military use of educational facilities: Sierra Leone's experience

Colonel Amadu Bangura, Ministry of Defense, Sierra Leone

Colonel Amadu Bangura shared his personal experience of the civil war in his country, where the military use of educational facilities had a serious long-term effect on the country's recovery. During the civil war, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels regularly used educational facilities as training camps or bases, transforming those facilities into military objectives for government forces. Several facilities were left in ruins following the civil war, requiring considerable investment by successive governments which were operating in difficult fiscal contexts.

Colonel Bangura provided examples of the long-term effect of military use of educational facilities, including the Bondubu Teachers College, which the RUF attacked and used as a training base. Education provision was disrupted and staff and students were affected. He noted that teaching at that college location never resumed. Njala University was also affected, forcing the college authorities to relocate to the University in Freetown, which had relatively better security and a more conducive learning environment.

Educational facilities were also used by peacekeeping forces, including a primary school in Gondama. This facility was never returned to education authorities and is now a base for the 5th Infantry Brigade of the Sierra Leone armed forces. Instead, a new structure was built in an alternative site. Colonel Bangura highlighted the psychological impact on students and teachers of a school being used for military purposes, making it difficult for them to return.

The speaker noted the usefulness of the *Guidelines* in the post-conflict recovery program in Sierra Leone, and recommended that the government should enshrine in its constitution a commitment by armed forces and peacekeeping troops to spare all educational facilities during military operations.

Colonel Bangura also recommended: incorporation of the *Guidelines* into military training, doctrine, and standard operating procedures; holding government workshops, seminars and training by security experts and academics with the participation of high level military personnel; implementation of punitive actions by government for military commanders to act as a deterrent against military use; and the use of the media to sensitize the military on the effect of military use. He called on states to raise awareness of the Safe Schools Declaration and *Guidelines* across African armies, including through sharing of information among peacekeepers in the theatre of operations.

Implementing the ban on military use of schools by peacekeepers: Central African Republic's experience

Lieutenant Commander Tasnuva Anan, Bangladesh Navy, currently serving with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

Case Study: Central African Republic

The United Nations Infantry Battalion Manual (*Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Field Support, United Nations Infantry Battalion Manual, 2012, sec. 2.13*) states that “[t]he military has a special role to play in promoting the protection of children in their areas of operation and in preventing violations, exploitation and abuse [...] Therefore, special attention must be paid to the protection needs of girls and boys who are extremely vulnerable in conflict. Important issues that require compliance by infantry battalions are: – Children should not be put in the direct line of danger [...] – Schools shall not be used by the military in their operations”.

Lt. Cdr. Anan explained how MINUSCA offers a strong example of leadership among UN peacekeeping operations in the protection of schools and universities against military use, having issued a 2015 directive from the highest level on the protection of schools and universities against military use. The fact that the directive was issued from the highest level – by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for MINUSCA – created a strong obligation to comply.

Case Study: Central African Republic

In the Central African Republic, MINUSCA issued a directive in 2015 (*MINUSCA/OSRSG/046/2015*) which states that “[a]ll MINUSCA military and police personnel should avoid encroaching on the security and education of children by using the following guidelines as good practice [...] The use of a school or university by a party to a conflict is not permitted, and cannot provide grounds for continuation of such use”.

Protection of schools has become a central aspect of MINUSCA's work due to the increased number of educational institutions that have been used by armed groups. This is carried out in two main ways: 1) supporting implementation of the mandate through action; and 2) monitoring and reporting on the six grave violations of the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), including attacks against schools, as part of their child protection work. Physical protection for schools is provided through patrolling and demonstrating MINUSCA's presence. The Child Protection Advisor monitors and reports on violations.

Prior to MINUSCA's establishment in September 2014, *Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine's* (MISCA) troops and police were deployed in Bangui and other localities but lacked accommodation structures. Several battalions were accommodated in unused and abandoned school structures provided to them by the national and local authorities. An April 2015 survey carried out by the Educational Cluster found that 8.4 per cent of 335 schools in CAR had been used by armed groups or international peacekeeping forces between 2012 and April 2015. During the re-hatting of MISCA troops into MINUSCA in 2014, the SRSR for MINUSCA issued an instruction that all school premises occupied by MISCA forces be evacuated.

In December 2015, the SRSR issued a directive on the protection of schools and universities against military use (*MINUSCA/OSRSG/046/2015*). It directs MINUSCA forces and police not to use schools for any purpose, even when a school is not operational (e.g. during the weekend and holidays). It calls on MINUSCA forces and police to evacuate any abandoned schools and university buildings that they were occupying immediately in order to allow educational authorities to reopen them. In addition, the directive calls for all signs of militarization or fortification of such buildings or structures

to be completely removed following the evacuation, and for any damage caused to the institution to be repaired quickly before hand-over to the authorities, so as to allow the return of the institution to educational use.

The directive was disseminated by force commanders and police commissioners to all sectors, battalions, and company commanders for implementation on the ground. All sectors and battalions are fully aware of the directive and they have vacated all schools and universities which had been previously used by MISCA troops.

In 2015, for example, a primary school in Bangui that had been used by MISCA police, and thereafter MINUSCA, was evacuated. MINUSCA arranged renovation of the building, and then handed it over to the Ministry of National Education. In another case, in Damara, where a permanent operating base of the BURBATT battalion was located in an abandoned school, the school was evacuated in April 2016 and the troops were relocated to an administrative building on a different site. In a very positive example, in Rafai in the south-east of the country, where construction of accommodation for MINUSCA troops was pending, the mayor of the locality offered the troops an unused school for their accommodation but they declined, in compliance with the SRSF's directive.

As part of its work protecting schools against any military use or attack, MINUSCA takes steps to remove military troops from educational institutions. Continued patrolling is conducted in areas under the control of armed groups to monitor and report on use of schools, as well as other grave child rights violations. All sectors, battalions, and company commanders direct advocacy towards armed groups to encourage the evacuation of schools they are using. If required, a show of force is employed against armed groups who persist in occupying educational facilities

Case Study: Central African Republic

At the beginning of the 2016 school year, some schools in the west of the Central African Republic were occupied by armed groups. MINUSCA verbally requested them to leave the schools, but they did not leave using the justification that the school was closed. MINUSCA issued a press release on 27 September 2016, condemning the military use of some schools by armed groups and calling on them to: immediately vacate those schools, establish their checkpoints more than 500 meters from any school premises, and not to, in any way, impede the functioning of schools. The press release further stated that, if the armed groups failed to vacate the schools, MINUSCA would evict them through use of force. After the press release was issued, five schools were vacated by the armed groups; as of November 2016, six schools are still being used by armed groups, and MINUSCA continues its advocacy efforts to persuade these groups to leave.

Discussion highlights

Over two days of presentations and discussion, many interesting points were raised concerning the protection of education in situations of armed conflict. **Ms. Diane Misenga Kabeya, Deputy Head of Delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Delegation to the African Union**, in her capacity as discussion moderator, noted that both international humanitarian law and international human rights law apply in the situations discussed during the workshop. Ms. Misenga Kabeya outlined the various ways that conflict affects children's access to schools, and referred to several of the reasons why schools may be targeted by parties to conflict. These include the perception that a school is a symbol of government authority or of an education system that is perceived to be oppressive, or the perception that a school represents the continued existence of a national, religious, or ethnic culture.

Ms. Misenga Kabeya outlined the ICRC's engagement with the Safe Schools process. While not a member of GCPEA, the ICRC supported the process of drafting the *Guidelines* by contributing to the substance of the document. Ms. Misenga Kabeya pointed out that, while not legally binding or proposing to change existing law, the Safe Schools Declaration and the *Guidelines* can provide relevant practical guidance for those involved in the planning and execution of military operations. The ICRC staff is encouraged to consider using the *Guidelines* as a reference tool, among others, in their dialogue with states and non-state armed groups, and the ICRC has actively disseminated the *Guidelines* to its delegations.

Mr. Sunday Babatunde, OCHA's Acting Representative to the African Union and Regional Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination Officer, in his capacity as discussion moderator, pointed out the tension between governments providing schools and educational infrastructure, in recognition of their responsibility to provide education, but then taking military action that damages the same infrastructure. He called on workshop participants to advocate for the protection of education. Similarly, **Brig. Gen. G. Bili Mwale, Zambia's defense attaché to the African Union**, highlighted the need for armed forces to respect the community infrastructure that is provided by their government. Defense forces should also recognize that children are not accustomed to the presence of military in the vicinity of their schools, and should not support illegal military use of schools, or the use of schools as a launch-pad for military attacks.

Dr. Iyorlumun Uhaa, Head of Office of the UNICEF AU Liaison Office, in his capacity as discussion moderator, highlighted the experience of Kenya, where education has been disrupted by inter-ethnic conflict and cattle rustling. In June and July 2016, 4,600 children attending 20 schools were denied education when conflict between communities forced the schools to close. Dr. Uhaa referred to the well-known case of the attack on Garissa University in April 2015, when 147 university students were killed and many more were injured. He also highlighted an attack in December of the same year on a bus carrying teachers in Mandera, in which 30 teachers were killed. Following the attack more than 2,000 teachers fled the areas of Mandera, Garissa and Wajir. Dr. Uhaa emphasized the protective function of schools, which can keep children protected from risks including gender-based violence, child recruitment, child labor, and early marriage.

Mr. Muki M. Benas Phiri, Zambia's First Secretary for Legal Affairs, pointed out that the topic falls between government policy-making and armed forces policy. Engagement is needed at the policy-making level, but policy planning should be linked up with concerned stakeholders on the ground. The Zambian army is working with the Ministry of Defense to document 'common sense' approaches the army has taken to protect education, particularly during peacekeeping missions in neighboring countries. When further discussing the protection of schools during peacekeeping missions, **Dr. Jide Okeke, Head of Policy Development Unit, African Union Peace Support Operations Division**, recommended that the Declaration and the *Guidelines* be incorporated into pre-deployment training for African Union peacekeeping forces, and that they should also be included in peace agreements.

Workshopping of the draft toolkit to guide understanding and implementation of the *Guidelines*

Mr. Darin Reeves, Head of Training, Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Maj. Musa Gbow, AMISOM Child Protection Advisor, Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

On the second day of the workshop, the participants offered input into the draft toolkit being developed by the Dallaire Initiative in partnership with GCPEA. The toolkit has been created for the purpose of providing tactically and operationally relevant recommendations and considerations to help states to strengthen trainings and practices on the protection of educational facilities from military use and attack, in line with the guidance contained in the *Guidelines*.

Much input was received during both plenary and two break-out groups, during which the various tools were reviewed from both an operational/planning perspective as well as from a tactical/response perspective. The first group, moderated by Major Gbow, focused on the toolkit from the perspective of an operational commander and staff, while the second group, moderated by Mr. Reeves, reviewed the toolkit from the perspective of tactical users.

The draft toolkit received a supportive and enthusiastic response from the workshop participants. It was described as an extremely useful and valuable initiative, and very professional in content, approach and presentation. Many useful recommendations were received and will be integrated into the toolkit, including: emphasis on disadvantages to the military use of schools, thus supporting a zero tolerance attitude towards military use of schools; additional planning considerations; complementarity with civilian agencies and population; and changes to some terms used.

Summing up, the Dallaire Initiative emphasized the importance of ensuring that military forces are encouraged to work beyond the basic minimums of international law. Although schools can (in extreme circumstances) be used and targeted by military forces, a zero-tolerance policy should be adopted.

Recommendations

Recognizing the protective function of schools, which can keep children protected from risks including gender-based violence, child recruitment, child labor, and early marriage, and the negative impact of attacks on and military use of schools and universities, it was recommended that:

GCPEA should:

- Disseminate documents as widely as possible and in local languages, in particular the Safe Schools Declaration, the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, and [What Ministries Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use](#);
- Develop a similar toolkit, focused on police functions in situations of armed conflict.

Governments should:

- Endorse the Declaration and implement the *Guidelines*;
- Enshrine in legislation, policy, and national constitutions a commitment by armed forces and peacekeeping troops to spare all educational facilities during military operations;
- Incorporate the *Guidelines* into military training, doctrine, and standard operating procedures;
- Hold government workshops, seminars and training by security experts and academics with the participation of high level military personnel;
- Implement punitive measures for military commanders to deter military use of schools;
- Use media to sensitize the military on the effect of military use;
- Institutionalize cooperation between educational authorities and military forces to collect information concerning the condition of schools affected by attacks;
- Provide psychosocial support to teachers and students affected by insecurity;

Ministries of Defense should:

- Train armed forces on relevant international law, treaties, and protection mechanisms, in particular the Declaration, the *Guidelines*, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Sensitize armed forces to the vulnerability and risks which impact children during conflict, and existing protection mechanisms;
- Appoint focal points to be advocates for the protection of children and education;
- Strengthen the capacity of military forces to protect schools, drawing from the examples of protective measures contained within this report;
- Protect their government's investment in community infrastructure, including schools and universities, by avoiding military action that damages this infrastructure;

Educational authorities should:

- Require schools to each develop a protection and response action plan, which should be publicly displayed on the school premises;

The African Union should:

- Position itself at the forefront of the Safe Schools agenda;
- Raise awareness of the issue of attacks on and military use of educational facilities, by maintaining the issue on the agenda of the AU Summit and the Peace and Security Council, and organizing high level events on the issue;
- Encourage increased endorsement across the region of the Declaration and implementation of the *Guidelines*;
- Encourage the AU Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons to take concrete steps to prioritize and report on the protection of education from attack and military use.

Endorsing African Union states should:

- Raise awareness of the Declaration and *Guidelines* across African armies, including through sharing of information among peacekeepers in the theatre of operations;
- Include the Declaration and *Guidelines* in peace agreements;
- Lobby the PRC to include discussion of the Declaration and *Guidelines* on the agenda of the Executive Council;
- Encourage the AU Assembly to issue a decision, calling on all AU Member States to endorse the Declaration.

International and regional organizations should:

- Advocate at the highest level to encourage endorsement and implementation of the Declaration and the *Guidelines*;
- Incorporate the Declaration and *Guidelines* into pre-deployment training for peacekeepers;
- Disseminate the Declaration and *Guidelines* to their staff who work on education, child protection, conflict, and peacebuilding;
- Encourage their staff to use the Declaration and *Guidelines* as a reference tool in their dialogue with states and non-state armed groups on attacks on education and military use of schools.

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